

THE LONDON READER

of Literature, Science, Art, and General Information.

[THE RIGHT OF TRANSLATION IS RESERVED.]

[REGISTERED FOR TRANSMISSION ABROAD.]

No. 245.—VOL. X.]

FOR THE WEEK ENDING JANUARY 18, 1868.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



[THE POISONER DETECTED.]

THE GOLDEN HOPE.

BY MRS. H. LEWIS.

CHAPTER XIX.

Oh, what a state is guilt! how wild! how wretched! When apprehension can form naught but fears, And we distrust security herself.

Harewood.

DESPITE the wildly conflicting emotions into which she had been plunged by the results of her interview with Darcy Anchester, Cecile returned to the drawing-room with apparently entire self-possession. A few minutes only she lingered in the garden, with her face upturned to the night sky, but even Renee did not know how pale was that countenance, nor how wild the gaze she directed towards the brooding shadows. That weakness was but brief. Gathering all her strength and calmness, she dismissed the anxious ayah, and sauntered into the conservatory, as bright and smiling as if she had been really happy.

Alas, that her smiles were only like sunbeams playing about the brink of a treacherous and deadly Vesuvius, whose lava tides might break forth in one moment to overwhelm with ruin and death!

She came into the drawing-room, her hands filled with flowers, looking as serene as a care-free child. Lady Redwoode did not look up at her entrance, but Andrew Forsythe turned from the window and came towards her, his keen eyes observing, without appearing to do so, the dampness of Cecile's turquoise-coloured robe, and making his own deductions therefrom. He looked from that to the maiden's face, and was shrewd enough to detect that her smiles were assumed, but her mask was impenetrable, and even he could not hope to pierce it. But of one thing he became instantly assured—that she possessed a secret which it might be for his interest to discover.

He resolved therefore to apply himself to the task without delay.

He seated himself at her side and began a light conversation on trivial subjects, speaking in a low tone that he might not arouse the baroness from her

reveries, or disturb the faint, delicious harmonies which Hellice continued to evoke in the adjoining room. Cecile replied to him with a subdued gaiety which he instinctively felt to be assumed, and looked up to him with eyes as blue as the robe she wore, and almost as emotionless. Andrew Forsythe regarded her without any quickening of the pulse, for his heart was keeping time to the strange, sweet music of Hellice, yet he had resolved, during Cecile's absence, that if Hellice should remain deaf to his entreaties he would marry her cousin. He was determined to insure his future speedily, to become master of Redwoode first of all, yet he was equally resolved never to relinquish his hopes of winning Hellice. As may be guessed, his thoughts and intentions were chaotic, yet from them all stood out his twin hopes and passions—his love for Hellice and his love of wealth.

If he could combine the two he desired to do so; if not he would gratify them separately.

So he talked sweet nothings to the golden-haired Cecile, which he scarcely comprehended as he uttered them, and which she listened to with smiles and pretty affectations without even hearing them, so absorbed were both in schemes which neither would have dared reveal to the other.

The music at length died away as faintly as the murmur of a summer breeze; Lady Redwoode started, looked around with a slightly confused expression, and then went to Hellice, who was leaning over the piano, entirely forgetful of everything. She looked up brightly as the baroness paused at her side, and the brightness of her face was not assumed, but was a reflection from her strong, true, and courageous spirit. With characteristic nobleness and unselfishness, Hellice had buried in her own heart all her dead hopes, and she was not one to bid others mourn with her over those hidden graves. She had taken up the burden of life again, not with repining, but with courage and resoluteness, and, though at times she might grow weary and sad, she would never parade her grief to obtain sympathy.

Yet in her heart her deep love rested, saddened

but not subdued nor weakened, and she knew its strength would wane only with her life.

"Your music is very sad to-night, Hellice," said Lady Redwoode, bending over her with a strange tenderness transfiguring her proud, sweet face and struggling for expression in her dark blue eyes—"so very sad that it seemed to come from a breaking heart!"

Hellice's glowing face paled and for a single moment the angry look gathered in her eyes, but it passed away instantly as she answered:

"I had forgotten, Lady Redwoode, that anyone was listening to my idle fancies!"

"It did not come from your heart, then?" exclaimed the baroness, anxiously. "Are you not happy, Hellice? How can you be unhappy with so devoted a lover as Sir Richard Haughton, with so loving a sister as my Cecile, with a home like Redwoode, and with friends such as cluster around you?"

Hellice uplifted a pair of mournful eyes, and said, absently:

"It does seem strange, dear Lady Redwoode—"

"Lady Redwoode, Hellice! I am your aunt, and desire to be recognized as such," interposed her ladyship, with slight hauteur.

Hellice's face that had been hitherto so pale flushed painfully now, and she said, with an effort:

"Dear Aunt Agatha, I beg your pardon. I—I—it seems easier for me to address you by your title than by any term of relationship."

The baroness scarcely listened to this excuse, for she had already forgotten its cause. She laid her white, jewelled hand upon the rippling waves of dark hair framing in the lovely countenance of Hellice, and her voice was troubled as she said:

"Hellice, I have not been insensible to your sorrow of late. I know that something more than change of climate produced your recent illness. The doctor told me that you had received some great shock, and that, had it not been for your perfect physical organization, your illness would have been dangerous. I have not been blind to your treatment of Sir Richard. You seem to dread meeting him, and look almost

frightened at the sudden mention of his name. Tell me what all this means. Did you accept him before you knew your own heart? Did you leave a lover in India whom you regret?"

"Your suppositions are both wrong, Aunt Agatha," said Hellice, in a low tone, and with drooping head.

"I must solve this mystery, Hellice," said the baroness, gently, but firmly. "As your guardian and protectress, I must see that you do not rashly wreck your own happiness and that of Sir Richard's. Can it be possible that since you accepted him you have decided that your beauty should procure you a higher station than that accorded a baronet's wife? Do you look forward to entering society and winning a loftier rank?"

"Aunt Agatha!" interrupted Hellice, her eyes flashing with indignation and her lips quivering with wounded feeling.

The baroness did not observe the young girl's emotion, and continued:

"If my suppositions be correct, Hellice, permit me to set you right. There is no better family in the kingdom than that of Sir Richard Haughton, let the other's rank be what it may. He comes of an ancient and honourable race. The Haughtons have always intermarried with noble houses. Sir Richard is brave, noble, true-hearted, and generous to a fault. He has all the chivalrous instincts of his race. His life has not been chivalrous, but he has passed through his trials as a man of whom a mother or wife might well be proud. If you dissolve your engagement with him you will cast from your heart such an ill-will never again to be offered you. Think well, Hellice, before you suffer your ambition to mislead you."

"Lady Redwoods!" again ejaculated Hellice, but this time in a voice so sharp and keen that the baroness started at its sound. "You must not say such things to me," the young girl added, passionately. "You have no right. I will not hear them! I would not take such words from anyone but my own mother!" And she turned an angry, anguish-stricken look upon her protectress that told more of mental torture than of anger.

Lady Redwoods retreated a step before that look, comprehending that there were depths in Hellice's character which she had not yet explored.

"My dear," she said, soothingly, "I spoke to you as your mother—your adopted mother! If I have misjudged you I ask you to forgive me. I have been thinking intently this evening, and fancied I had found the solution of your singular conduct towards Sir Richard. Have I erred also in thinking that there is coldness between you?"

"I am not prepared to discuss the subject to-night, Aunt Agatha," said Hellice, wearily. "Let it rest until to-morrow, please."

The baroness reluctantly complied with this request. She could not resist the conviction that her interference was needed to direct her niece rightly, but as Hellice was in no mood to profit by her counsels, or to yield her confidence, she was forced to wait. She was by no means angry with the maiden. That earnest self-defence had touched her heart, and she thought to herself how preferable was this strong, true, self-respecting nature to Cecile's sycophantic one—for by this time she had begun to see dimly the real character of her chosen daughter.

With a sigh she put from her these profitless thoughts, and said:

"To-morrow, then, Hellice, you shall make me your confidant, and to-morrow Sir Richard will be here to congratulate you upon your recovery. You look quite restored to health, my dear, and to-morrow you must drive out, so that the fresh air may bring back the bloom to your cheeks."

"To-morrow!" repeated the young girl, dreamily, little imagining that the morrow would bring her a changed destiny. "To-morrow!"

"You are tired, Hellice," said the baroness, kindly. "Come with me to my rooms. You have never been in them yet, although Cecile has made herself perfectly familiar with them."

She offered her arm, and Hellice leaned upon it. They left the music-room, and passed into the drawing-room, where Andrew Forsythe was talking busily and gaily, and Cecile sat idly engaged in plucking the petals from the flowers she had gathered. She arched her brows slightly as the baroness and Hellice passed quietly through the apartment, and then resumed her trivial occupation with greater industry than before.

Lady Redwoods conducted her niece upstairs to a suite of rooms opposite those which had been assigned to Cecile. The chamber they first entered was an octagon-shaped parlour, the various sides decorated with exquisite paintings. Long and ample rose-coloured silk curtains shrouded the windows, and lights gleamed softly through the mellow shades of the hanging chandelier, whose lustres glittered and gleamed like imprisoned rain-

bows. The furniture was covered with pink brocade and formed of glistening satin-wood, which shone brightly, and was more than worthy its name. Huge antique vases of rare beauty and value thronged the mantelpiece, and were niched in corners. Exquisite statuettes reposed on carved brackets, and books littered the elegant tables in tempting profusion. It was a cozy, homely room, despite its luxuriosness, and presented a strong contrast to the simplicity of the tower-chamber that had been assigned to Hellice.

"It is a charming room," said the young girl, without a thought of envy for these luxuries, which she would have so well appreciated.

"It is very pleasant," said the baroness. "My dressing-room is next, and my bed-chamber is beyond that. The arrangement of my room is precisely similar to that of Cecile's."

She drew up towards the centre of the room a large easy-chair, stuffed with cushions, and bade Hellice be seated. Then she exhibited portfolios of engravings and pencil-sketches, a host of interesting curiosities, and watched the girl as she looked them over in thoughtful silence. Something there was in the dark, drooping head that touched her heart with an indefinable emotion, and she longed to embrace the maiden as she had done once before, and call her sweet names and admit her to the innermost recesses and the holiest love of her heart. She became conscious that she had not bestowed her best and strongest love upon Cecile. She felt that Cecile had not the power to stir her soul to such depths as Hellice had. She felt a great wave of yearning tenderness sweep over her heart; but angry at what she deemed her weakness, she stilled the wild impulse to take Hellice in her arms, and her demeanour became constrained and troubled.

Hellice was quick to notice the difference, and arose at once to take her departure. Lady Redwoods was conscious of the cause of her abrupt leave-taking, but she dared not urge her to stay, lest the repressed tide of tender yearning should impel her to utter words which in a calmer moment she might regret. They separated, therefore, quietly and coldly, and when Hellice had left the room the baroness paced her apartment in excitement and agitation, wringing her hands and weeping as only strong natures can weep.

Meanwhile, Hellice, to whom this coldness could scarcely give an added pang of grief, crossed the broad hall, and paused a moment in the deep oval window to look down upon the lovely, quiet lawn. A dread of the morrow, when she must explain her troubles to Lady Redwoods, or meet Sir Richard again, came over her, and she longed to flee from Redwoods at once, and find rest somewhere where she might never dread the torture of beholding the lover who must henceforth be dead to her. This wild impulse grew into a determination while she stood there, and when she turned away it was with the resolve to quit her present home on the coming morning.

She had no intention of going clandestinely. It did not occur to her that Lady Redwoods would seek to prevent her departure, and she did not even think of returning to her ladyship to impart her resolve. But she felt a desire to seek her foster-sister and Renee, and to tell them she was going away. She knew Cecile thoroughly—knew her to be false and hypocritical—but Cecile had been the playmate of her childhood, her nearest friend, her supposed twin-sister, and the old associations were still dear to Hellice. And Renee, as her grandmother, had a right to know that the bond between them was to be severed for ever in a few hours. This the young girl, yearning for sympathy and kindness, told herself, and she turned her footsteps to Cecile's boudoir.

Renee was not there, but the curtains of silk and lace were drawn, the lights gleamed in the chandelier, and an easy-chair was drawn up beside the little marble table in the centre of the room, upon which a basket of silver flagons filled with hot-house fruits reposed beside a Bohemian decanter of wine. It was Cecile's habit to partake of some slight refreshment before retiring, and it was Renee's province to prepare it for her.

Hellice noticed the affectionate attention of the ayah, and with a bitter smile she turned towards the window. The light of the chandelier was too strong for her weary eyes, and she liked to look out upon the pleasant night scene, the contemplation of which seemed to aid her efforts at self-control. She took her seat at the window, and the double curtains fell in front of her, completely shutting her out of the pretty, gaily lighted chamber.

The minutes glided on, and still Hellice remained in her little nook, forgetful that she was waiting for her cousin, forgetful also of the scene on which she gazed, her mind occupied with efforts to map out her future. She strove to accustom herself to thoughts of loneliness, but she had a hard task be-

fore her. Here was one of those sweet and sunshiny natures that seem formed to make home happy. Her tastes were all calculated to brighten and beautify the fireside. With all her brilliant loveliness and genius her truest happiness could be found only in a domestic life, such as was the ideal of Sir Richard Haughton. As girls are apt to do, she had woven sweet dreams of a happy home, where love should abide eternally, and it was hard to feel that she must henceforth be homeless and without sympathy—in brief, alone!

She was meeting these thoughts bravely, when her reverie was suddenly interrupted by the sound of voices, which she recognized as belonging to her cousin and the ayah. Thus recalled to herself, she became conscious that there were tears on her cheeks: she wiped them away, and strove to regain her usual bearing before she made her presence known. The time thus occupied was less than a minute, but before it had elapsed, brief as it was, Hellice had heard words that made her resume her seat, pale and breathless, longing to escape unseen, and not daring to show herself to her relatives.

Cecile and Renee had come in together, the former from the hall, the latter from the adjoining dressing-room. The face of the former was pale and her manner distracted, so that the Hindoo uttered a cry of alarm at beholding her.

"What is it, my sweet?" she ejaculated, going towards her. "Has anyone been cross to you? Has anyone looked darkly at you?"

"Everything seems to be going wrong, Renee!" cried Cecile, sinking into a chair, and refusing to permit the ayah to care for her. "I have not played my cards well at all. Hellice has been recognized as my adopted sister, and mamma has made a will bequeathing her half her fortune. Just think of that! Renee—she is to have as much as I am! As innocent as Hellice seems, she is old enough to look out for herself. I should not wonder if her illness had only been feigned to work upon Lady Redwood's feelings. And they have been together continually this evening. Hellice has been in mamma's room—"

"How do you know that?" interrupted Renee.

"Mamma said so herself. I stepped into her room as I came upstairs. She was making a Niobe of herself, and Cecile's tone was petulant and heartless. 'Of course, she has again those doubts of her, and she will have them, Renee, as long as she lives. I wish she was dead and the property safely disposed of.' As it is I never know when I wake in the morning but that some caprice of hers causes Hellice and me to change places before night!"

These were the words that frightened Hellice back into her window nook in the involuntary position of eavesdropper.

"You are right, my bright-haired bird, my little one!" said the Asiatic, soothingly, approaching her young mistress, and suddenly dropping on her knees beside her. "But you have not told me half your trouble. This young man, Cecile—this Mr. Auchester—who has followed you from India, and who came to-night like a fond and adoring lover, and who parted from you as a tyrant parts from his victim—have you nothing to say about him? I saw my bird flutter up to him, proud and happy, but when she came away her wings were broken and her spirit crushed."

Cecile hesitated, then a glance into the brown-loving face of her attendant decided her to be frank—as frank as she could be, for frankness was no part of her nature.

"I—I love him, Renee," she said, hesitatingly. "I mean that I did love him. I love him however no longer, and I shall never marry him. He is not the man he pretended to be and has no right to the name he bears. I am tired of him, and I suppose I shall marry Andrew Forsythe—unless, indeed, I get a titled husband. If Lady Redwood's will were but destroyed, and it were out of her power to make another will, I should be perfectly happy."

"Can you not persuade her—?"

"Impossible!" ejaculated the girl, impatiently.

"Why, I should only ruin myself."

"True, Cecile," said the Hindoo, thoughtfully. "I know only one sure remedy. I do know a way to make you mistress of Redwoods immediately, and not only mistress of Redwoods but of all Lady Redwood's wealth. Andrew Forsythe is a man to be bribed, and he could get that will from Mr. Kenneth, if you would promise him your hand—"

"I would not hesitate to marry him," declared Cecile, "if he could procure me that will and destroy it in my presence! But that would do no good—mamma would learn of its disappearance and make another."

"But if she were dead?"

"She will not die," said Cecile, impatiently. "Do you thus tantalize me, Renee?"

"But she may die," persisted the Hindoo, fixing

her bead-like eyes upon her young mistress. "She may die, Cecile."

"And she touched her bosom significantly."

Cecile shuddered and grew pale. Bad at heart as she was, she could not think of the awful crime thus suggested without some remorseful pangs.

"No, no, Renee," she whispered; "I could never consent to that!"

The Asiatic looked at her young mistress, as if pitying her cowardice, and then said:

"What is a single life, my sweet, when it stands between you and wealth, happiness and honour? You have not been educated to whine over a life lost, my pet. Think of it—if Lady Redwoode were dead, you would be mistress here. You could make your own terms with Andrew Forsythe for the will in Mr. Kenneth's possession. You could send Hellice away, and thus revenge yourself on her for what she has made you suffer since you came here. You can make an Eden of Redwoode, fill the place with grand company, and be a queen over all. Think of the diamonds."

"Hush!" said Cecile, hoarsely.

The Asiatic became silent, watching her mistress with a furtive smile.

The appeal had been made to one who could well appreciate it. Her knowledge of Cecile's character had shown her what arguments to use. As she had said, Cecile had not been educated to respect the sacredness of human life. In that land where the Thug finds his home, where the burning sun, the deadly winds, and the malarial conspire against the traveller and sojourner, where deadly reptiles and beasts of prey sensibly diminish the rates of human life, where the passions are hot and strong, and the wrathful blow falls heavily, human lives are held cheaply. Cecile, without the shadow of a religious principle, thought lightly of human existence. It was not at the thought of a sudden and terrible death she shuddered, but it seemed to her like profanation to destroy all that proud Saxon beauty, so like, yet as unlike, her own, and to lay low the peerless being who had received her and loved her as her daughter.

Renee left her arguments to work in the girl's heart.

Cecile thought over them calmly, and added to them one of which the ayah did not dream. The remembrance of Darcy Anchester's power over her stimulated her evil passions to supernatural activity. Her love for him had turned to bitter hatred, and she would have given much to dismiss and defy him. That could be done only when her position had become thoroughly secure—and it could never become secure while Lady Redwoode lived.

It was a terrible picture, that of that fair young girl, with her blue eyes and gleaming hair, seemingly so pure and so innocent, yet harbouring thoughts that might have affrighted the worst outcast in existence. It seemed incredible that one so young and tenderly nurtured could be at heart so vile; but she had been all her life under Renee's training, and no Asiatic could have excelled her in artfulness, dissimulation, and the capacity for extreme wickedness. It seemed indeed as if her moral nature, having never had proper aliment, had died out entirely.

"Sometimes I am afraid Hellice will take your place," said the woman, artfully. "If the least weight were added to Lady Redwoode's suspicion—that Darcy Anchester were to scheme for himself and say things—"

Cecile flushed and looked up, determined at last.

"Say no more, Renee," she whispered, adding: "You have guessed something of the truth. Darcy Anchester heard papa's dying communications to you, to Hellice, and to me."

The ayah uttered an exclamation of incredulity, but she saw that Cecile spoke truthfully; her eyes glittered, and she said:

"It must be, then, this very night!"

Cecile bowed assent.

The woman drew hurriedly from her bosom the tiny golden casket, unlocked it, and selected from among its contents a tiny, gold-capped phial, which she handed to her young mistress.

"One breath of that brings death," she said, restoring the casket to its hiding-place. "It must be held to Lady Redwoode's face that she may inhale it."

"You must do it, Renee!" faltered Cecile.

"You forget that I do not have access to her rooms," responded the Hindoo. "Where is all your courage, my sweet? You must go to Lady Redwoode's room now, immediately, and induce her to inhale this. It is like a perfume, and she will suspect nothing. One breath of it, and you are mistress of Redwoode. Have you strength enough for the task?"

"Yes, yes," said the girl, feverishly, all her hopes and fears crowding heavily upon her. "I will do it, Renee. I must do it, or all will be lost."

She took the phial in her hand, listened absently to the ayah's injunctions to avoid inhaling it herself, then pushed the woman from her, and crossed the floor once or twice with feeble and uncertain steps.

"She must be removed from my path," she murmured, holding the opaque phial against the light, and her voice sounded hollow and strange in her ears. "She loved me—she claimed me—she showered blessings upon me! But she must die! It must be put beyond her power to rob me of my wealth and honours. I cannot be dependent on her changing caprices. She must die, and by my hands!"

She looked curiously at her small white hands, as if wondering whether they would be strong enough to grasp the proud position at which she aimed, and then she smiled strangely, gave a last look at her smiling tempestress, and, strong in her guilty resolve, quitted her room, stealing stealthily to Lady Redwoode's apartments.

CHAPTER XX.

In this wild world the fondest and the best
Are the most tried, most troubled, and distressed.

Crabbe.

Thou dost wrong me, thou dissembler, thou!

Shakespeare.

For a brief space Hellice remained in her concealment, paralyzed with fear and horror. The wicked conference she had overheard seemed to her incredible. She fancied she must have been dreaming, but the light that stole in to her through the curtains of silk and lace, the sound of Renee's footsteps and muttered soliloquy, all convinced her of the hideous reality of the scene of which she had just been an unseen witness. A horrible spell seemed to weigh upon her, chaining her down to motionlessness, and all her efforts availed not to break it. Her breath came heavily through her parted lips; an iron hand seemed laid upon her wildly throbbing heart, and her dark eyes shone with a wild light, as if already there were gazing upon the lifeless form of Lady Redwoode.

Suddenly the spell that bound her was broken. The ayah had retired into the adjoining room, and the sound of the door as it closed behind her was sufficient to arouse Hellice from this terrible paralysis. With one low cry that seemed to come from her very heart she sprang from the window seat, dashed aside the shrouding curtains, crossed the floor with a leopard-like leap, and gained the corridor.

Here she paused a moment to collect her thoughts, for even in her alarm Hellice could not bear to betray to the baroness the horrible wickedness of the girl she had claimed as her own. She felt that Cecile would not be precipitate in her movements, that her habitual caution would not forsake her, and a noble resolve thrilled her being, to save both mother and child—the former from a speedy and sudden death, the latter from a life-long remorse, as well as from the discovery of her intended crime.

She moved forward quietly to Lady Redwoode's room, the same she had visited an hour earlier. The door was slightly ajar, and she passed into the room. The lights burned dimly now, but Hellice could plainly see at the first glance that the room was unoccupied. Her heart thrilled with a sudden fear that Lady Redwoode might have retired to bed, and that the deadly poison might have been already made to do its work. With a quick, soft step she advanced into the dressing-room, but started as she beheld her form multiplied in the numerous mirrors lining the walls. She did not linger here, but advanced at once to the door opening into the bed-room. It was shut, but the latch yielded to Hellice's gentle touch, and she pushed it open sufficiently to command a view of the interior of the chamber.

Her eyes grew wilder in their expression and her face became deathly pale at the scene she took in at one comprehensive glance.

There was a night-lamp in the bed-room, shedding a low-toned but clear and mellow light. The bed was clearly revealed, the light falling upon it and its occupant. It was a pretty, low, French bedstead, looking like a snow-drift half veiled in a rosy mist. The curtains were of pink silk and thin white lace, looped away in front with long, drooping sprays of roses, on which glittering drops of simulated dew rested lightly.

Lady Redwoode was sleeping soundly. Her pale golden hair had been gathered under a pretty cap of lace and ribbons, and was drawn away from her pure, sweet face, every feature of which stood out with the distinctness of sculptured marble. There was a disturbed quiver about her mouth which testified that she had not retired to rest with happy thoughts, and her cheeks were as pale as if she knew the fate that threatened her.

But Hellice gave the sleeper only one brief

glance, concentrating her attention upon the other occupant of the chamber. That other was Cecile. The acknowledged daughter of Lady Redwoode was creeping stealthily towards the bed, guilt expressed in every line of her face, in her half-suppressed breathing, and shown plainly in her manner and bearing. She looked like a bird of prey about to pounce upon its victim. Her blue eyes glittered with deadly intent, gleaming like the blue steel of a Damascus sword, her slender fingers wound themselves with a grip of iron about the death-laden phial she carried in her hand, and her lips had wreathed themselves together into an expression of fearful subtlety and cunning.

There was little resemblance in her now to the pure and lovely Lady Redwoode. Her murderous thoughts had brought into every feature a strange and subtle likeness to the Hindoo ayah, and, despite her golden hair and blue eyes, one would not have found it hard to believe Cecile to be an Asiatic, with the worst faults of the Oriental races.

Hellice watched her with a sort of fascination, and, unconscious of scrutiny, Cecile crept nearer and nearer to the bed, moving slowly and almost imperceptibly. Her fingers began to play nervously with the golden cap of the phial, as if she would have it ready for use.

It was time to do something, and Hellice strove to think rapidly and clearly.

She was anxious to awaken the sleeper to a consciousness of her danger. She also wished to spare Cecile the condemnation that would greet the discovery of her intended crime. To betray Cecile's guilt would be, she believed, a death-blow to the proud and loving mother. To get Cecile away quietly, and then to communicate to her that she should leave Redwoode for ever on the morrow, was the idea that suggested itself to her. If Cecile were relieved of all apprehensions that her cousin would share in the baroness's wealth she would, Hellice believed, relinquish her murderous designs and become a true and affectionate daughter.

She moved the door slightly to attract Cecile's attention, but the effort was vain. She dared not call to her lest the sound of her voice should awaken the sleeper. Without deliberating longer in the emergency, she glided through the aperture into the bed-chamber, and moved softly behind Cecile towards the bedside. The thick carpet muffled her footstep, and she held her breath lest her breathing should startle Cecile into self-betrayal or precipitancy in her awful designs.

Slowly and softly she advanced, unseen and unheard. As no leopard in its native wild was more graceful than Hellice, so no leopard could have moved more stilly, when planning an attack on an unsuspecting prey. But the comparison could go no farther, for Hellice was planning to save a life, a reputation, the life-long happiness of two women—one of whom was dearer to her than life itself, and the other she had regarded as a sister from their mutual infancy.

The two girls presented a remarkable contrasting picture.

One so wicked and deadly in her intentions, the other so brave, noble and strong, with purity shining in her sweet face, an heroic resolve beaming in her troubled eyes, and a great and holy purpose manifest in her manner.

Cecile continued to creep towards the unconscious sleeper, and Hellice continued to glide behind her with imitative cautiousness of movement. Cecile gained the bedside, bent over its occupant, and then noiselessly removed the cap from the phial. The next moment she loosened the stopper.

A moment more and the deadly drug would have been placed to the nostrils of the sleeper, and no art could have availed to save Lady Redwoode's life.

But at the instant when Cecile stopped to enact the fatal, final scene of the tragedy—at the instant when the stopper was about to be withdrawn—at the instant of the foul attempted consummation of the awful crime—a hand was laid upon Cecile's with the firmness of the strongest steel!

The hand held her like a vice, and another hand—a firm, white hand, slender and delicate, yet nerved at that moment with the strength of a man—took from her the death-laden bottle.

Cecile looked up affrighted, and beheld her cousin, so pale and stern that she seemed to her like an avenging angel, in her deadly terror; she uttered a loud and piercing scream that rang startlingly through the room like a wail.

Hellice had not anticipated this result to her interposition, and she involuntarily retreated a step, the phial in her hand, making a gesture of silence.

But it was too late for silence. Lady Redwoode had been awakened, and she sprang up in her bed, alarmed beyond measure, demanding what had happened.

It seemed as though some familiar demon inspired Cecile at that moment. Comprehending the exposure that awaited her, furious at Hellice for betraying her, seeing upon what a narrow isthmus between safety and ruin she stood, she sprang forward with one wild bound, caught her cousin in a frantic embrace, and shrieked:

"Help! Help! Murder! Save my mother!"

Hellice strove to release herself, but in vain. Cecile clung to her, renewing her cries for help. Members of the household began to flock in, terrified by those fearful night-cries. The struggling cousins were seen by the whole family, and Cecile did not relinquish her hold until Mr. Kenneth, shocked and frightened, loosened her grasp on Hellice.

"What does this mean?" cried the baroness, looking from one to the other of the cousins, and then at the various members of the gathering group.

The question was echoed by Mr. Forsythe, Mr. Kenneth, the housekeeper, butler, and by the ayah, who stood in the doorway with pallid face and starting eyes.

"Bear witness, all of you!" cried Cecile, in a ringing voice, exhibiting a pale and rigid countenance, "that Hellice was seeking my mother's life! I saw her creeping into these rooms and I followed her, thinking she came from some evil motive. I found her attempting to poison her as she slept, and I saved her life at the risk of my own."

Every eye was turned in horror upon Hellice.

For one brief second the blind instinct of self-preservation impelled Hellice to declare the truth and turn the accusation upon Cecile. She drew herself up, her eyes flashed, and the indignant words arose in her throat, but they never found utterance.

She could not blight Lady Redwoode's life, she could not deprive her cousin of all hope for the future. She believed that if she were gone from Redwoode Cecile would relinquish her wicked designs and become a comfort to her mother. She believed that the cause of her cousin's conduct was jealousy at her recognition as co-heiress with her. That jealousy removed, Cecile would look upon her present conduct with horror, and compensate for it by a life of goodness and devotion. As she thus reasoned, a sublime spirit of self-sacrifice, like that which has nerved many a gentle, lovingly nurtured woman to meet unmurmuringly the terrors of the martyr's stake, arose within her breast. Instead of uttering the expected denial, she bowed her head without a word.

"See, she has the bottle still in her hand!" cried Cecile, triumphantly, at the corroboration Hellice's conduct gave her false assertion, but yet cunning enough to conceal her joy.

Every eye was directed to the tiny phial, and it fell from Hellice's nerveless hand to the floor. The golden cap, which Cecile in her fright had dropped, lay at a little distance from it.

"Cecile is mistaken!" cried Lady Redwoode. "Is it not so, Hellice? Deny her accusation! Tell me that you did not mean to kill me!" she pleaded, tenderness and anguish mingling in her tones.

Hellice maintained silence, but her face grew whiter than the cap which crowned her ladyship's head.

"I know it is not so!" exclaimed the baroness. "Hellice is incapable of such a crime. The phial contains some innocent perfume. Give it to me, Cecile, and let me see what it is!"

Cecile picked up the bottle and silently gave it into the hands of her mother.

Lady Redwoode was about to remove the stopper, when Hellice cried out:

"Do not smell it! A breath from that phial gives death! It is an Indian poison—"

She stopped abruptly as Lady Redwoode flung the phial from her and looked at her with an anguished gaze.

Hellice's heart arose in response to that look in wild and tender yearning, and again she dropped her gaze that Lady Redwoode might not read her innocence in her eyes.

Hellice's assertion of the deadly properties of the supposed perfume were to various members of the group sufficient evidence of her guilt. The servants moved away from her as if they feared she would kill them all by an exhibition of more poison; the housekeeper and the butler, with apprehensive glances at the ayah, whispered to each other that it was not safe to live under the same roof with one of the Hindoo race; and Mr. Forsythe and Mr. Kenneth watched the two girls, not knowing what to say.

At length the old lawyer ventured a remark.

"I do not see any motive for such a crime," he said, slowly.

"Motive!" repeated Cecile, putting her handkerchief to her eyes. "Oh, Hellice, is it possible that you would have killed my mother because you feared that she would destroy the will she made in your

favour? You could not have been so wicked! I did not dream to-night when you came to my room and told me of your fears that you would have recourse to violence. You know that you said that you could not bear to be dependant upon mamma's caprice, and that if you had your fortune in your own hands—"

"Cecile!" cried Hellice, involuntarily, turning an angry look upon her cousin, and regarding her with flashing eyes. "How dare you—"

"It's true!" interrupted one of the maids, a terror-stricken, open-mouthed country girl. "I saw you go into Miss Cecile's room, before she came up, and you stayed there too, miss!"

Cecile could scarcely repress a shriek at this assertion, but she knew how much depended on her self-control. Renee was frightened too, and began to consider how she should give evidence against Hellice.

"It is painful for me to say anything against you, Hellice," said Cecile, with sobs, "but your Indian blood—"

"Indian blood is as good as any," interrupted the ayah, roughly. "Hellice brought that bottle with her from India, and if she were going to kill any lady with it you can lay the intention to her English blood!"

For Hellice to have contradicted the ayah, and declared the presence of the casket in Renee's bosom, would have required more self-thought than she possessed. She believed that she would escape with a dismissal from Redwoode, but her grandmother would be punished with imprisonment if her share in the attempted crime were known.

The evidence against the accused had become most formidable. Mr. Kenneth had been staggered by it, and his round face had become very grave in its expression. Not a doubt existed in anyone's mind, except in Mr. Forsythe's, and his previous study of the cousins contributed greatly to his comprehension of the present affair. Lady Redwoode would have persisted in her belief of Hellice's innocence, but that the girl refused to deny the accusation, and preserved her mysterious and unsatisfactory silence.

The conviction of Hellice's unworthiness was a great shock to the baroness. She had begun to take a greater hold on her heart than Cecile had, and she had yearned over her as if she had been nearer and dearer to her than Cecile. She lay back on her pillow, deprived of strength, and experiencing a strangely crushed feeling.

"Tell me there is some mistake, Hellice," she moaned, faintly.

A pained, agonized look convulsed Hellice's face. It was gone in a moment, however, yet with all her efforts she could not be as calm and unconcerned as her deceitful cousin.

"Do you deny the accusation, Miss Glintwick?" asked the old lawyer, as a judge might have addressed a prisoner at the bar.

Still Hellice made no answer.

"Have you any statement to make, any explanation to give, Miss Hellice?" inquired Andrew Forsythe, anxiously.

The girl hesitated, and then replied:

"I have nothing to say. Cecile must speak for me!"

"So young, yet so hardened!" groaned good Mr. Kenneth, his last hope in the girl's innocence dashed to the ground. "How could you plot to destroy the life of your benefactress, the aunt whom your father so cruelly and terribly wronged? Was there no gratitude in your heart? Could a little miserable money outweigh in your mind the noble and generous life of Lady Redwoode, that life which is one constant work of good to others?"

"Oh, don't!" cried Hellice, putting up her hands pleadingly.

There was a brief silence. The first consternation had been passed, and a feeling had sprung up of wonder as to what would be done with the supposed culprit. Lady Redwoode was appealed to by Mr. Kenneth, and she answered:

"I cannot discuss the subject farther to-night. I have not decided what to do with her. Let her go to her room. Cecile will stay with me!"

She turned her face to the wall, unable to say more. Cecile declared her readiness to remain during the night with her, and the group began to disperse to their rooms, the butler, Mr. Kenneth, and Mr. Forsythe alone remaining. Hellice, without a word, retired from the bed-chamber. In the little parlour Mr. Forsythe approached her, held out his hand, and whispered:

"I believe in your innocence, Miss Hellice. I know you are innocent! I understand and appreciate your motives for silence!"

Hellice gave him a grateful look, and permitted him to press her hand warmly. Any sign of friendship in her present extremity was eagerly welcomed,

and she forgot her late displeasure towards him in her present gratitude. His words went with her like warmth and sunshine to her chamber, and she was almost unconscious that she was attended by Mr. Kenneth and the butler, who waited outside until she had locked the door within.

"She can't escape from her windows, I suppose?" inquired the old lawyer.

"No, sir, not easily," replied the butler; "I am going to sleep before her door all night, and I shall watch her closely. No fear, Mr. Kenneth, but I shall produce her safe enough in the morning!"

With these words, he stretched himself upon the carpet before the door, in such a manner as to check all egress from the maiden's chamber, and prepared to keep a vigilant watch throughout the night.

(To be continued.)

A MARRIAGE CUSTOM IN YORKSHIRE—In the remote parts of Yorkshire it is the custom to pour a kettleful of boiling water over the doorstep just after the bride has left her house; and they say that before it dries up another marriage is sure to be agreed upon.

THE VAMPIRE BAT.—The vampire bat is to be found in the warm latitudes of South America, and measures about 26 in.; some have, however, been killed measuring 32 in. in length from wing to wing. The vampire frequents old houses and hollow trees, and sometimes a cluster of them may be seen in the forest, hanging head downwards from the branch of a tree. This animal, though existing chiefly on the blood which it draws from men and animals, sometimes regales itself on fruit. When the moon shines bright, and the fruit of the banana tree is ripe, it may be seen approaching the tree and eating the fruit. There are two species of vampire in Guiana, a larger and smaller. The larger sucks men and animals, the smaller appears to confine itself to birds; many farmers up the rivers of Demerara are completely unsuccessful with their fowls, on account of the small vampire.

THE HERIT APPARENT.—In a new treatise on the Statutes of Limitations attention is drawn to an Act with which we should imagine that the subjects of the realm are not universally acquainted:—"By 33 Geo. III., c. 125, it is provided that where an heir apparent to the Throne has a separate establishment, any person having or claiming any debt or demand against him must deliver the particulars of it to the proper office, within ten days after the expiration of the quarter in which the debt or demand was incurred, or that in default any such debt or demand shall be barred both at law and in equity, and every security given in consideration thereof shall be void, and that when such particulars have been properly delivered the creditor may sue and prosecute in the manner therein provided for such debt or demand within three calendar months after delivery of such particulars, but not afterwards." It is unnecessary to inquire into the historical circumstances which called this statute into being, but its existence in the present day may fairly be deemed anomalous.

QUEEN ANNE'S FARTHING.—About one English coin there exists a very singular delusion—Queen Anne's farthing. Often and often have the officers of the British Museum received letters asking whether, as the writer was in possession of the third of the farthings, of which the Museum had the other two, he was not entitled to some 1,000*l.* or so; and grievous no doubt has been his disappointment at being told that his fancied treasure might possibly be worth some four or five shillings. How the delusion ever originated it is impossible to say; but one account tells us that a lady in Yorkshire, having lost one of these farthings, which she valued as the bequest of a dear friend, offered a very large sum for its recovery, and this gave rise to a false impression of the value of any specimen. It is commonly believed that only three examples of the farthing were struck off, because it was found that there was a flaw near the bridge of the Queen's nose; another account says the die broke in two. There are really no less than five or six different patterns of the farthing, but most of them were struck for approval only, and never issued. The genuine farthing has the inscription "Anna Dei Gratia" surrounding the Queen's bust; on the reverse the figure of, and the inscription "Britannia." It is dated 1714. Another, which was also perhaps in circulation, exactly resembles the one just mentioned, but has the date 1713. They have broad milled edges like the farthings of George III. Of the patterns, the rarest seems to be one like the genuine farthing, but with the inscription "Anna Regina." In 1823 there was a trial at Dublin about a Queen Anne's farthing, which it was stated had actually been sold for 80*l.*



[A SUDDEN EXCITEMENT.]

WHO WAS IT?

CHAPTER V.

UNUSUALLY gay and charming, the three young friends looked alike in pure white, with holly wreaths in their hair, as they slowly descended the wide oaken staircase arm in arm. A footman was lighting the hall lamp, for the winter dusk gathered early, and the girls were merrily chatting about the evening's festivity, when suddenly a loud, long shriek echoed through the hall. A heavy glass shade fell from the man's hand with a crash, and the young ladies clung to one another aghast, for mortal terror was in the cry, and a dead silence followed it.

"What was it, John?" demanded Octavia, very pale, but steady in a moment.

"I'll go and see, miss;" and the man hurried away.

"Where did the dreadful scream come from?" asked Rose, collecting her wits as rapidly as possible.

"Above us somewhere. Oh, let us go down among the visitors. I am frightened to death," whispered Blanche, trembling and faint.

Hurrying into the drawing-room, they found only Mr. Annon and the major, both looking startled, and staring out of the windows.

"Did you hear it? What could it be? Don't leave us!" cried the girls in a breath as they rushed in.

The gentlemen had heard, but couldn't explain the cry, and were quite ready to protect the pretty girls who clustered about them, like frightened fawns. John speedily appeared, looking rather wild, and as eager to tell his tale as they were to listen.

"It's Patty, one of the maids, miss, in a fit. She went up to the north gallery to see that the fires were right, for it takes a quantity of wood to warm the gallery even enough for dancing, as you know, miss. Well, it was dark, for the fires were low, and her candle went out as she opened the door, being flurried, as the maids always are when they go in there. Half way down the gallery she says she heard a rustling and stopped. She's the bravest of 'em all, and she called out, 'I see you!' thinking it was some of us trying to frighten her. No one answered, and she went on a bit, when suddenly the fire gave one flash, and there right before her was the ghost."

"Don't be foolish, John. Tell us what it was," said Octavia, sharply, though her face paled and her heart sank as the last word passed the man's lips.

"It was a tall, black figure, miss, with a very white face, and a black hood. She saw it plain, and turned to go away, but she hadn't gone a dozen steps when there it was again before her, the same tall, dark thing with the white face looking out from the black hood. It lifted its arm as if to hold her, but she gave a spring and dreadful screech, then ran to Mrs. Benson's room, where she dropped in a fit."

"How absurd to be frightened by the shadows of the figures in armour that stand along the gallery," said Rose, boldly enough, though she would herself have declined entering the gallery without a light.

"Nay, I don't wonder, it's a dismal place at night. How is the poor thing?" asked Blanche, still hanging on the major's arm.

"If mamma knows nothing of it, tell Mrs. Benson to keep it from her, please. She is not well, and such things annoy her very much," said Octavia, adding, as the man turned away, "Did anyone look in the gallery after Patty told the tale?"

"No, miss, I'll go and do it myself; I'm not afraid of ghosts, saving your presence, ladies," replied John.

"Where is Sir Jasper?" suddenly asked the major.

"Here I am. What a noise someone has been making. It disturbed a capital dream. Why, Tavia, what is it?" And Sir Jasper came out of the library with a sleepy face and disordered hair.

They told him the story, whereat he laughed heartily, and said the maids were a foolish set to be scared by a shadow. While he still laughed and joked Mrs. Snowdon entered, looking alarmed, and anxious to know the cause of the confusion.

"How interesting! I never knew you kept a ghost. Tell me all about it, Sir Jasper, and soothe our nerves by satisfying our curiosity," she said, in her half-persuasive, half-commanding way, as she seated herself on Lady Treherne's sacred sofa.

"There's not much to tell, except that this place used to be an abbey, in fact as well as in name. An ancestor founded it, and for years the monks led a jolly life here, as one may see, for the cellar is twice as large as the chapel, and much better preserved. But another ancestor, a gay and gallant baron, took a fancy to the site for his castle, and, in spite of prayers, anathemas, and excommunication, he turned the poor fellows out, pulled down the abbey, and built this fine old place. Abbot Boniface, as he left his abbey, uttered a heavy curse on all who should live here, and vowed to haunt us till the last Treherne vanished from the face of the earth. With this amiable threat he left Baron Roland to his doom, and

died as soon as he could, in order to begin his cheerful mission."

"Did he haunt the place?" asked Blanche, eagerly.

"Yes, most faithfully from that time to this. Some say many of the monks still glide about the oldest parts of the abbey, for Roland spared the chapel and the north gallery which joined it to the modern building. Poor fellows, they are welcome, and once a year they have a chance to warm themselves by the great fires always kindled at Christmas in the gallery."

"Mrs. Benson once told me that when the ghost walked it was a sure sign of a coming death in the family. Is that true?" asked Rose, whose curiosity was excited by the expression of Octavia's face, and a certain uneasiness in Sir Jasper's manner in spite of his merry mood.

"There is a stupid superstition of that sort in the family, but no one except the servants believe it, of course. In times of illness some silly maid or creaking old woman can easily fancy they see a phantom, and, if death comes, they are sure of the ghostly warning. Mrs. Benson saw it before my father died, and old Roger the night my uncle was seized with apoplexy. Patty will never be made to believe that this warning does not forebode the death of Maurice or myself, for the gallant spirit leaves the ladies of our house to depart in peace. How does it strike you, cousin?"

Turning, as he spoke, Sir Jasper glanced at Mr. Treherne, who had entered while he spoke.

"I am quite sceptical and indifferent to the whole affair, but I agree with Octavia that it is best to say nothing to my aunt if she is ignorant of the matter. Her rooms are a long way off, and perhaps she did not hear the confusion."

"You seem to hear everything; you were not with us when I said that," and Octavia looked up with an air of surprise.

Smiling significantly, Mr. Treherne answered:

"I hear, see, and understand many things that escape others. Jasper, allow me to advise you to smooth the hair which your sleep has disarranged. Mrs. Snowdon, permit me, this rich velvet catches the least speck."

And with his handkerchief he delicately brushed away several streaks of dust which clung to the lady's skirt.

Sir Jasper turned hastily on his heel, and went to remake his toilet; Mrs. Snowdon bit her lip, but thanked Mr. Treherne sweetly, and begged him to fasten her glove.

"As she did so he said, softly:

"Be more careful next time. Octavia has keen eyes, and the major may prove inconvenient."

"I have no fear that you will," she whispered, with a malicious glance.

Hero the entrance of Lady Treherne put an end to the ghostly episode, for it was evident that she knew nothing of it.

Octavia slipped away to question John, and learned that no sign of a phantom was to be seen. Mr. Treherne devoted himself to Mrs. Snowdon, and the major entertained Lady Treherne, while Sir Jasper and the girls chatted apart.

It was Christmas Eve, and a dance in the great gallery was the yearly festival at the abbey. All had been eager for it, but the maid's story seemed to have damped their enthusiasm, though no one would own it. This annoyed Sir Jasper, and he exerted himself to clear the atmosphere by affecting a gaiety he did not feel.

The moment the gentlemen came in after dinner he whispered to his mother, who arose, asked the general for his arm, and led the way to the north gallery, whence the sound of music proceeded. The rest followed in a merry procession— even Mr. Treherne, for two footmen carried him up the great staircase, chair and all.

Nothing could look less ghostly now than the haunted gallery.

First blazed up a wide chimney at either end, long rows of figures clad in armour stood on each side, one mailed hand grasping a lance, the other bearing a lighted candle, a device of Sir Jasper's. Narrow windows pierced in the thick walls let in gleams of wintry moonlight; ivy, holly, and evergreen glistened in the ruddy glow of mingled firelight and candle light. From the arched stone roof hung tattered hangings, and in the midst depended a great bunch of mistletoe. Red-cushioned seats stood in recessed window nooks, and from behind a high screen of oak sounded the sultry air of Sir Roger de Coverly.

With the utmost gravity and stateliness, Lady Treherne and the general led off the dance, for, according to the good old fashion, the men and maids in their best array joined and danced with their betters.

Sir Jasper swirled the old housekeeper till her head spun round and her dress rustled noiselessly. Mrs. Snowdon captivated the gray-haired butler by her condescension, and John was made a proud man by the hand of his young mistress. The major became popular among the pretty maids, and Rose danced the footman out of breath long before the music paused.

The merriment increased from that moment, and when the general surprised Lady Treherne by gallantly saluting her as she unconsciously stood under the mistletoe the applause was immense.

Everyone followed the old gentleman's example as fast as an opportunity occurred; and the young ladies soon had as fine a colour as the housemaids. More dancing, games, songs, and all manner of festive devices occupied the evening, yet, under cover of the quiet, more than one little scene was enacted that night, and in an hour of seeming frivolity the currents of several lives were changed.

By a skilful manoeuvre Mr. Annon led Octavia to an isolated recess as if to rest after a brisk game, and, taking advantage of the auspicious hour, pleaded his suit. She heard him patiently, and when he paused said slowly, yet decidedly, and with no sign of maiden hesitation:

"Thank you for the honour you do me, but I cannot accept it, for I do not love you. I think I never can."

"Have you tried?" he asked, eagerly.

"Yes, indeed I have. I like you as a friend, but not more. I know that mamma desires it, that Jasper hopes for it, and I try to please them; but love will not be forced, so what can I do?" and she smiled in spite of herself at her own blunt simplicity.

"No, but it can be cherished, strengthened and in time won with patience and devotion. Let me try, Octavia; it is but fair, unless you have already learned from another the lesson I hoped to teach. Is it so?"

"No, I think not. I do not understand myself as yet. I am so young, and this is so sudden. Give me time, Frank."

She blushed and trembled now, looked half angry, half beseechingly, and altogether lovely.

"How much time shall I give? It cannot take long to read a heart like yours, dear."

And, fancying her emotion a propitious omen, he assumed the lover in good earnest.

"Give me time till the New Year. I will answer then, and meantime leave me free both to study myself and you. We have known each other long, I own, but, still, this changes everything, and makes you seem to me another person. Be patient, Frank, and I will try to make my duty a pleasure."

"I will. Heaven bless you for the kind hope, Octavia. It has been mine for years, and if I lose it, it will go hardly with me."

Later in the evening General Snowdon stood examining the antique screen. In many places the carved oak was pierced right through, so that voices were audible from behind it.

The musicians had gone down to supper, the young people were busy at the other end of the hall, and as the old gentlemen admired the quaint carving the sound of his own name caught his ear. The housekeeper and butler still remained, though the other servants had gone, and, sitting cosily behind the screen, chatted in low tones, believing themselves secure.

"It was Mrs. Snowdon, Adam, as I'm a living creature; though I wouldn't say it to anyone but you. She and Sir Jasper were here wrapped in cloaks and up to mischief till by bound. She is a beauty, but I don't envy her, and there'll be trouble in the house if she stays long."

"But how do you know, Mrs. Benson, that she was here? Where's your proof?" asked the pompos butler.

"Look at this, and then look at the ornamental trimming of the lady's dress. You men are so dull about such matters you'd never observe these little points. Well, I was here first after Patty, and my light shone on this jet ornament lying near where she saw the spirit. No one has any such pretty trifles but Mrs. Snowdon, and these are all over her gown. If that is not proof, what is?"

"Well, admitting it, I then say what on earth should she and master be up here for at such a time?" asked the slow-witted butler.

"Adam, we are old servants of the family, and to you I'll say what tortures shouldn't draw from me to another. Master has been wild, as you know, and it's my belief that he loved this lady abroad. There was a talk of some mystery, misdeed, or misfortune, more than a year ago, and she was connected with it. I'm loth to say it, but I think master loves her still, and she him. The general is an old man, she is young, and so spirited and winsome she can't in reason care for him as she would for a fine, gallant gentleman like Sir Jasper. There's trouble brewing, Adam, mark my words, there's trouble brewing for the Trehernes."

So low had the voices fallen that the listener could not have caught the words had not his ear been strained to the utmost. He did, however, hear all, and his wasted face flushed with the wrath of a young man, then grew pale and stern as he turned to watch his wife.

She stood apart from the others, talking to Sir Jasper who looked unusually handsome as he fanned her with a devoted air.

"Perhaps it is true," thought the old man, bitterly. "They are well matched, were lovers once, no doubt, and long to be so again. Poor Edith, I was very blind."

And with his gray head bowed upon his breast the general stole away, carrying an arrow in his brave old heart.

"Blanche, come here and rest; you will be ill tomorrow, and I promised mamma to take care of you." With which elder-sisterly command Rose led the girl to an immense old chair, which held them both. "Now listen to me, and follow my advice, for I am wise in my generation though not yet gray. They are all busy, so leave them alone, and let me show you what is to be done." Rose spoke softly, but with great resolution, and nodded her pretty head so energetically that the holly-berries came rolling over her white shoulders. "We are not as rich as we might be, and must establish ourselves as soon and as well as possible. I intend to be Lady Treherne, you can be the honourable Mrs. Annon, if you give your mind to it."

"My dear child, are you mad?" whispered Blanche. "Far from it, but you will be if you waste your time on Maurice. He is poor, and a cripple, though very charming, I admit. He loves Tavia, and she will marry him, I am sure. She can't endure Frank, but tries to do so because Lady Treherne commands it. Nothing will come of it, so try your fascinations and comfort the poor man; sympathy now will foster love hereafter."

"Don't talk so here, Rose, someone will hear us," began her sister; but the other broke in briskly: "No fear, crowd is the best place for secrets. Now remember what I say, and make your game while the ball is rolling; some people are careful not to put their plans into words, but I'm no hypocrite, and say plainly what I mean. Bear my sage counsel in mind, and act wisely. Now come and begin."

Mr. Treherne was sitting alone by one of the great fires, regarding the gay scene with a serious air. For him there was neither dancing nor games; he could only roam about, catching glimpses of for-

bidden pleasures, impossible delights, and youthful hopes for ever lost to him."

Sad but not morose was his face, and to Octavia it was a mute reproof which she could not long resist. Coming up, as if to warn herself, she spoke to him in her usually frank and friendly way, and felt her heart beat faster when she saw how swift a change her cordial manner wrought in him.

"How pretty your holly is; do you remember how we used to go and gather it for festivals like this when we were happy children?" he asked, looking up at her with eyes full of tender admiration.

"Yes, I remember. Everyone wears it to-night as a badge, but you have none. Let me get you a little. I like to have you one of us in all things."

She leaned forward to break a green sprig from the branch over the chimney-piece, the strong draught drew in her grave-like skirt, and in an instant she was enveloped in flames.

"Maurice, save me, help me!" cried a voice of fear and agony, and before anyone could reach her, before he himself knew how the deed was done, Mr. Treherne had thrown himself from his chair, wrapt the tiger skin tightly around her, and knelt there clasping her in his arms heedless of fire, pain or the incoherent expressions of love that broke from his lips.

CHAPTER VI.

GREAT was the confusion and alarm which reigned for many minutes, but when the panic subsided two miracles became known. Octavia was entirely uninjured, and Mr. Treherne was standing on his feet—a thing which for months he had not done without crutches. In the excitement of the moment no one observed this, all were crowding around the girl, who, pale and breathless, but now self-possessed, was the first to exclaim, pointing to her cousin, who had drawn himself up, with the help of his chair, and leaned there smiling, with a face full of intense delight.

"Look at Maurice! Oh, Jasper, help him, or he'll fall!"

Sir Jasper sprang to his side, and put a strong arm about him, while a chorus of wonder, sympathy, and congratulations rose about them.

"Why, lad, what does it mean? Have you been deceiving us all this time?" cried Sir Jasper as Mr. Treherne leaned on him, looking exhausted, but extremely happy.

"It means that I am not to be a cripple all my life; that they did not deceive me when they said a sudden shock might electrify me with more potent magnetism than any they could apply. It has, and if I am cured I will owe it all to you, Octavia."

He stretched his hands towards her with a gesture of such passionate gratitude that the girl covered her face to hide its traitorous tenderness, and Lady Treherne went to him, saying brokenly as she embraced him with maternal warmth:

"Heaven bless you for this not, Maurice, and reward you with a perfect cure. To you I owe the lives of both my children; how can I thank you as I ought?"

"I dare not tell you yet," he whispered, eagerly, then added, "I am growing faint, aunt; get me away before I make a scene."

This hint recalled my Lady Treherne to her usual state of dignified self-possession. Bidding Sir Jasper and the major help Mr. Treherne to his room without delay, she begged Rose to comfort her sister, who was sobbing hysterically, and as they all obeyed her she led her daughter away to her own apartment, for the festivities of the evening were now at an end. At the same time Mrs. Snowdon and Mr. Annon bade Lady Treherne good night, as if they also were about to retire; but as they reached the door of the gallery Mrs. Snowdon paused and beckoned Mr. Annon back. They were alone now, and standing before the fire which had so nearly made that Christmas Eve a tragic one; she turned to him with a face full of interest and sympathy as she said, pointing towards the blackened shreds of Octavia's dress, and the scorched tiger skin which still lay at their feet:

"That was both a fortunate and an unfortunate little affair, but I fear Maurice's gain will be your loss. Pardon my frankness for Octavia's sake; she is a fine girl, and I long to see her given to one worthy of her. I am a woman to read faces quickly; I know that your suit does not prosper as you would have it, and I desire to help you—may I?"

"Indeed you may, and command any service from me in return. But to what do I owe this unexpected friendliness?" cried Mr. Annon, both grateful and surprised.

"To my regard for the young lady, my wish to save her from an unworthy man."

"Do you mean Mr. Treherne?" asked Mr. Annon, more and more amazed.

"I do. Octavia must not marry a gambler!"

"My dear lady, you labour under some mistake. Mr. Treherne is by no means a gambler. I owe him no good-will, but I cannot hear him slandered."

"You are generous, but I am not mistaken. Can you, on your honour, assure me that Maurice never played?"

Mrs. Snowdon's keen eyes were fixed on him, and he looked embarrassed for a moment, but answered, with some hesitation:

"Why, no. I cannot say that; but I can assure you that he is not an habitual gambler. All young men of his rank play more or less, especially abroad. It is merely an amusement with most, and among men is not considered dishonourable or dangerous. Ladies think differently, I believe—at least in England."

At the word "abroad" Mrs. Snowdon's face brightened, and she suddenly dropped her eyes as if afraid of betraying some secret purpose.

"Indeed we do, and well we may, many of us having suffered from this pernicious habit. I have had especial cause to dread and condemn it, and therefore fear that Octavia should in time suffer what I have suffered as a girl; this fear urges me to interfere where otherwise I should be dumb. Mr. Annon, there was a rumour that Maurice was forced to quit Paris, owing to some dishonourable practice at the gaming-table. Is this true?"

"Nay, don't ask me; upon my soul, I cannot tell you. I only know that something was amiss, but what it was I never learned, and various tales were whispered at the clubs. Sir Jasper indignantly denied them all. The bravery with which Maurice saved his cousin, and the sad affliction which fell upon him, silenced the gossip, and it was soon forgotten."

Mrs. Snowdon remained silent for a moment, with brows knit in deep thought, while Mr. Annon unasily watched her. Suddenly she glanced over her shoulder, drew nearer, and whispered, cautiously:

"Did the rumours of which you speak charge him with—?" And the last word was breathed into Mr. Annon's ear almost inaudibly. He started as if some new light broke upon him, and stared at the speaker with a troubled face for an instant, saying, hastily:

"No, but now you remind me that when an affair

of that sort was discussed the other day Mr. Treherne looked very odd, and rolled himself away, as if it didn't interest him. I can't believe it, and yet it may be something of the kind. That would account for old Sir Jasper's whim, and Mr. Treherne's steady denial of any knowledge of the cause. How did you learn this?"

"My woman's wit suggested it, and my woman's will shall confirm or destroy the suspicion. Lady Treherne and Octavia evidently know nothing, but they shall if there be any danger of the girl's being won by him."

"You would not tell her!" exclaimed Mr. Annon.

"I will, unless you do it," was the firm answer.

"Never! To betray a friend, even to gain the woman I love, is a thing I cannot do; my honour forbids it."

Mrs. Snowdon smiled scornfully.

"Men's code of honour is a strong one, and we poor women suffer from it. Leave this to me, do your best, and if all other means fail, you may be glad to try my device to prevent Maurice from marrying his cousin. Gratitude and pity are strong allies, and if he recovers he will move heaven and earth to gain her. Good night." And, leaving her last words to rankle in Mr. Annon's mind, Mrs. Snowdon departed to endure sleepless hours full of tormenting memories, new-born hopes, and alternations of determination and despair.

Mr. Treherne's prospect of recovery filled the whole house with delight, for his patient courage and unfailing cheerfulness had endeared him to all. It was no transient amendment, for day by day he steadily gained strength and power, passing rapidly from chair to crutches, from crutches to a cane and a friend's arm, which was always ready for him. Pain returned with returning vitality, but he bore it with a fortitude that touched all who witnessed it. At times motion was torture; yet motion was necessary lest the torpidity should return, and Mr. Treherne took his daily exercise with unfailing perseverance, saying, with a smile, though great drops stood upon his forehead:

"I have something dearer than even health to win. Hold me up, Jasper, and let me stagger on, in spite of everything, till my twelve turns are made."

He remembered Lady Treherne's words, "If you were well I'd gladly give my girl to you." This inspired him with strength, endurance, and a happiness which could not be concealed. It overflowed in all his looks, words and acts; it infected everyone, and made these holidays the blithest the old abbey had seen for many a day.

Mr. Annon devoted himself to Octavia, and, in spite of

her command to be left in peace till the New Year, she was very kind—so kind that hope arose in his heart, though he saw that something like compassion often shone on him from her frank eyes, and her compliance had no touch of the tender delicacy which lovers long to see. She still avoided Mr. Treherne, but so skillfully that few observed the change—except Mr. Annon and himself. In public Sir Jasper appeared to worship at the sprightly Rose's shrine, and she fancied her game was prospering well.

But had anyone peeped behind the scenes it would have been discovered that during the half-hour before dinner, when everyone was in their dressing-rooms, and the general taking his nap, a pair of ghostly black figures flitted about the haunted gallery, where no servant ventured without orders. The major fancied himself the only one who had made this discovery, for Mrs. Snowdon affected Mr. Treherne's society in public, and was assiduous in serving and amusing the "dear convalescent," as she called him. But the general did not sleep; he too watched and waited, longing, yet dreading to speak, and hoping that this was but a harmless freak of Edith's, for her caprices were many, and till now he had indulged them freely. This hesitation disgusted the major, who being a bachelor knew little of woman's ways, and less of their powers of persuasion. The day before the New Year he took a sudden resolution, and demanded a private interview with the general.

"I have come on an unpleasant errand, sir," he abruptly began as the old man received him with an expression which rather daunted the major. "My friendship for Lady Treherne, and my guardianship of her children, make me jealous of the honour of the family. I fear it is in danger, sir; pardon me for saying it, but your wife is the cause."

"May I trouble you to explain, Major Royston?" was all the general's reply as his old face grew stern and haughty.

"I will, sir, briefly. I happen to know from Jasper that there were love passages between Miss Duberry and himself a year or more ago in Paris. A whim parted them, and she married. So far no reproach rests upon either, but since she came here it has been evident to others as well as myself that Jasper's affection has revived, and that Mrs. Snowdon does not reject and reprove it as she should. They often meet, and from Jasper's manner I am convinced that mischief is afoot. He is ardent, headstrong and utterly regardless of the world's opinion in some cases. I have watched them; and what I tell you is true."

"Prove it!"

"I will. They meet in the north gallery, wrapt in dark cloaks, and play the part of ghost if anyone comes. I concealed myself behind the screen last evening at dusk, and satisfied myself that my suspicions were correct. I heard little of their conversation, but that little was enough."

"Repeat it, if you please."

"Sir Jasper seemed pleading for some promise which she reluctantly gave, saying: 'While you live I will be true to my word with everyone but him. He will suspect, and it will be useless to keep it from him.' 'He will shoot me for this if he knows I am the traitor,' expostulated Sir Jasper. 'He shall not know that; I can hoodwink him easily, and serve my purpose also.' You are mysterious, but I leave all to you and wait for my reward; when shall I have it, Edith?" She laughed, and answered so low that I could not hear, for they left the gallery as they spoke. Forgive me, general, for the pain I inflict. You are the only person to whom I have spoken, and you are the only person who can properly and promptly prevent this affair from bringing open shame and scandal on an honourable house. To you I leave it, and I will do my part with this infatuated young man if you will withdraw the temptation which will ruin him."

"I will, thank you, major. Trust to me, and by to-morrow I will prove that I can act as becomes me."

The grief and misery in the general's face touched the major. He silently wrung his hand and went away, thanking heaven more fervently than ever that no coquette of a woman had it in her power to break his heart.

While this scene was going on above another was taking place in the library.

Mr. Treherne sat there alone, thinking happy thoughts evidently, for his eyes shone and his lips smiled as he mused, while watching the splendour of a winter sunset. A soft rustle and the faint scent of violets warned him of Mrs. Snowdon's approach, and a sudden foreboding told him that danger was near.

The instant he saw her face his fear was confirmed, for exultation, resolve, and love met and mingled in the expression it wore. Leaning in the window recess, where the red light shone full on her lovely face and queenly figure, she said, softly, yet with a ruthless accent below the softness:

"Dreaming dreams, Maurice, which will never come to pass, unless I will it. I know your secret and I shall use it to prevent the fulfilment of the foolish hope you cherish."

"Who told you?" he demanded, with an almost fierce flush of the eye and an angry flush.

"I discovered it, as I warned you I should. My memory is good, I recall the conversation of long ago. I observe the faces, words, and acts of those whom I suspect, and unconscious hints from them give me the truth."

"I doubt it."

And Mr. Treherne smiled securely.

She stooped and whispered one short sentence into his ear. Whatever it was caused him to start up with a pale, panic-stricken face, and look at her as if she had pronounced his doom.

"Do you doubt it now?" she asked, coldly.

"He told you. Even your skill and craft could not discover it alone," he muttered.

"Nay, I told you nothing was impossible to a determined woman. I needed no help, for I knew more than you think."

He sank down again in a desponding attitude and hid his face, saying, mournfully:

"I might have known you would hunt me down and destroy my hopes when they were surest. How will you use this unhappy secret?"

"I will tell Octavia and make her duty less hard. It will be kind to both of you, for even with her this memory would mar your happiness, and it will save her from the shame and grief of discovering when too late that she has given herself to a—"

"Stop!" he cried, in a tone that made her start and turn pale, as he rose out of his chair, white with a stern indignation which awed her for a moment. "You shall not utter that word. You know but half the truth, and if you wrong me or trouble that girl, I will turn traitor also, and tell the general the game you are playing with my cousin. You feign to love me as you feigned before, but his title is the bait now as then, and you fancy that by threatening to mar my hopes you will secure my silence and gain your end."

"Wrong, quite wrong; Jasper is nothing to me. I use him as a tool, not you. If I threaten, it is to keep you from Octavia, who cannot forgive the past and love you for yourself as I have done all these miserable months. You say I know but half the truth; tell me the whole, and I will spare you."

If ever a man was tempted to betray a trust it was Mr. Treherne then. A word, and Octavia might be his; silence, and she might be lost; for this woman was in earnest, and possessed the power to ruin his good name for ever. The truth leaped to his lips, and would have passed them, had not his eye fallen on the portrait of Sir Jasper's father.

This man had loved and sheltered the orphan all his life, had made of him a son, and, dying, urged him to guard, serve, and save the rebellious youth he left, when most needing a father's care.

"I promised, and I will keep my promise at all costs," sighed Mr. Treherne, and, with a gesture full of pathetic patience, he waved the fair tempter from him, saying, steadily, "I will never tell you, though you rob me of that which is dearer than my life. Go and work your will, but remember that when you might have won the deepest gratitude of the man you profess to love you chose instead to earn his hatred and contempt."

Waiting for no word of hers, he took refuge in his room, and Edith Snowdon sank down upon the couch, struggling with the contending emotions of love and jealousy, remorse and despair. How long she sat there she could not tell; an approaching step recalled her to herself, and, looking up, she saw Octavia.

As the girl approached down the long vista of the drawing-rooms, her youth and beauty, innocence and candour, touched that fairer and more gifted woman with an envy she had never known before. Something in the girl's face struck her instantly; a look of peace and purity, a sweet serenity more winning than loveliness, more impressive than dignity or grace. With a smile on her lips, yet a half-sad, half-tender light in her eyes, and a cluster of pale winter roses in her hand, she came on till she stood before her rival, and, offering the flowers, said, in words as simple as sincere:

"Dear Mrs. Snowdon, I cannot let the last sun of the old year set on any misdeeds of mine for which I may atone. I have disliked, distrusted, and misjudged you, and now I come to you in all humility to say forgive me."

With the girlish abandon of her impulsive nature, Octavia knelt down before the woman who was plotting to destroy her happiness, laid the roses like a little peace-offering on her lap, and with eloquently pleading eyes waited for pardon.

For a moment Mrs. Snowdon watched her, fancying it a well-acted ruse to disarm a dangerous rival;

but in that sweet face there was no art; one glance showed her that. The words smote her to the heart, and won her in spite of pride or passion as she suddenly took the girl into her arms, weeping repentant tears. Neither spoke, but in the silence each felt the barrier which had stood between them vanishing, and each learned to know the other better in that moment than in a year of ordinary life.

Octavia rejoiced at the instinct which had prompted her to make this appeal, assured that behind the veil of coldness, pride and levity which this woman wore there was a heart aching for sympathy, help, and love. Mrs. Snowden told her sister self all from her, leaving all that was true and noble.

Art she could meet with equal art, but nature conquered her, for, spite of her mis-spent life and faulty character, the gem of virtue which lives in the worst was there, only waiting for the fostering sun and dew of love to strengthen it, even though the harvest be a late one.

"Forgive you!" she cried, brokenly. "It is I who should ask forgiveness of you—I who should stone, confess and repeat. Pardon me, pity me, love me, for I am more wretched than you know."

"Dear Mrs. Snowden, I do with heart and soul. Believe it, and let me be your friend," was the soft answer.

"Heaven knows I need one!" sighed the poor woman, still holding fast the only creature which wholly won her. "Child, I am not good, but not so bad that I dare not look on your innocent face and call you friend. I never had one of my own sex, I never knew my mother; and no one ever saw in me the possibility of goodness, truth and justice but you. Trust, love, and help me, Octavia, and I will reward you with a better life, if I can do no more."

"I will, and the new year shall be happier than the old."

"Heaven bless you for that prophecy; may I be worthy of it."

Then as a bell warned them away, the rivals kissed each other tenderly, and parted friends.

As Mrs. Snowden entered her room, she saw her husband sitting with his gray head resting on his hands, and heard him murmur despairingly to himself:

"My life makes her miserable, but for the sin of it I'd die to free her."

"No, live for me, and teach me to be happy in your love."

The clear voice startled him, but not so much as the beautiful changed face of the wife, who laid the gray head on her bosom, saying, tenderly:

"My kind and patient husband, you have been deceived. From me you shall know all the truth, and when you have forgiven my faulty past you shall see how happy I will try to make your future."

(To be continued.)

SWEET ROSES YANGLED.

CHAPTER LXXIV.

"My dear Anna," said Guy Denham, "I cannot agree with you, but I will promise to do as you wish when I am free to act for myself. But it will be useless. No young girl could leave in the night without a protector, and make her way through a dense woodland alone on such an errand as that. She would never have the nerve to do it."

"Few women could do it, I grant; but there are exceptions, and Rosa Gordon is one of them. I saw the tiger spirit aroused in her last summer when she was disappointed in her dreams of fortune, and I believe she could do even this. I wish most sincerely that I had made no effort to expose her to Mrs. Hawks. The money would have been hers, and she might never have crossed our path again. It has done poor Inez little service, now that she has gained it."

"All that is gone past recall, Anna. You thought you were doing right when you attempted to serve my interests by ruining Miss Gordon's, so don't grieve over it, dear. I will think over your suggestion, and as soon as possible take measures to assure myself if there be any foundation for it. Till I am convinced of her guilt beyond a doubt it would be most cruel to direct suspicion towards a young and friendless stranger."

"You always think of others before yourself, Guy. But if Rosa Gordon has done what I suspect, she deserves no mercy at our hands. She has avenged herself on me for unmasking her last summer, by taking your pistol, that I might be made wretched by having you implicated in this fearful charge. The longer I think about it the deeper becomes the conviction that I have found the real criminal."

"My dear sister, I would far sooner suffer this in-

justice myself than become the medium of bringing such a charge against a helpless girl, unless it were better sustained than by mere suspicion. It is beneath my manhood to screen myself by accusing Miss Gordon. No; I must wait until I can find some tangible evidence against her, or I can never breathe her name in connection with this sad affair."

"But how are you to obtain that evidence unless you take measures at once to follow her up through every moment of time from the day she left Silvermere till the steamer left the landing below here?"

"I will do that much, I pledge you my word, Anna. I will set a detective on her track, who will be silent as death, and keen enough to find out all I wish to know. But really I do not think we shall be rewarded by the discovery of anything to criminate Miss Gordon. She left Silvermere at her own earnest request, and she is too ignorant of the localities hereabouts to know when the steamer landed near her late home. There was no moon last night, and I cannot believe that any girl would have the nerve to walk a mile in the night through a thick wood, th' she might take a human life when she reached the end of her pilgrimage. It is impossible."

"Impossible or not, it was done. Guy, and you will yet learn that I am right. I can do nothing now but pray to heaven to bring the truth to light, and to shield you from the harm that threatens you while this cloud hangs over you."

"Don't give way to fancies, my dear sister, and persuade yourself that things will go badly with me. Aside from the humiliation of being examined on such a charge, I have hate to dread. Those who will sit in judgment upon me have known me all my life, and I am persuaded that few of them would be willing to see me indicted for the murder of Godfrey. I trust that within a few hours I shall be free to go whither I please, and I promise you to take the first steps towards satisfying your doubts concerning Miss Gordon. Cease to let your thoughts dwell sadly or doubtfully on my fate, for I am sure that I shall return to you before the day is over cleared from the charge, so far as the dismissal of the magistrate can have that effect."

Mrs. Langley tried to believe him, and she reluctantly answered:

"You must have your own way, I suppose, and I will make every effort to do what is best for you. I must go now and see how poor Inez has passed the night. Oh! Guy, how shall I ever tell her what has happened?"

"Your good angel must guide you, Anna, and show you how to break it gently to the unfortunate girl. I would give a great deal if she had never come hither to have her heart broken in so cruel a manner. Go to her now. Breakfast will soon be ready, and on this morning you must not keep it waiting."

Mrs. Langley kissed him tenderly, and, holding his hand clasped tenderly in his own, she tearfully said:

"Forgive me, Guy, that I, for one moment, believed in the possibility of your guilt."

She hurried from the room, crossed the hall, and stopped at the door of the dressing-room adjoining the chamber of Inez. In that a couch had been placed for Mrs. Perkins, and her hostess found her sitting by the only window with her hands clasped in a hopeless manner, and her face clouded with anxiety and grief.

On the entrance of Mrs. Langley she nervously arose, and, in guarded tones, said:

"Miss Inez is sleeping at last, ma'am. She moaned and went on in such a manner till nearly day as went to my heart; and once, after she fell asleep, she cried out, in agony: 'Oh! there is blood—blood on my conscience! His blood!' I went into her, but she was sleeping under the influence of the drops you told me to persuade her to take."

Mrs. Langley listened with a strange thrill of emotion. She softly said:

"I am glad she slept, at all events, Mrs. Perkins. I will go in now and look at her."

The door of communication was partly open, and, gliding through it, Mrs. Langley stood beside the bed of Inez. She lay like a broken flower upon her pillow, all the colour gone from her rounded cheeks, all the brightness from her beaming face. Heavy, dark circles were beneath her eyes, and her pale lips wore an expression of suffering and sadness that went to the heart of her friend.

Inez was under the influence of morphine, and her fingers moved nervously at intervals, as if trying to grasp something that eluded them. The fixed gaze of Mrs. Langley disturbed her, and she suddenly unclosed her large, dark eyes, and asked:

"Where am I? What has happened to bring me to this strange place? Who are you, and what are

you doing in my room? or, rather, what am I doing in this room, for it does not belong to me?"

Mrs. Langley bent forward and softly said:

"Inez, darling, don't you know me? I am the friend to whose house you came yesterday. Don't you remember that I brought you here?"

"Here?" she dreamily repeated. "What am I doing here? Ah! I remember now I came hither to find my love—my betrothed. I believed him true, I trusted him as my own soul; but he was false to me—false—false. I have repaid him, though. Do you think it wrong to take life, madam? If you do, condemn me, for I have killed him. I have Spanish blood in my veins, and it rose against him till I could not hold my hand, and he lies cold, cold—dead by this feeble hand. Look at it. Does it look strong enough to take a human life?"

Inez held up her hand, exquisite in shape and delicacy, and surveyed it with her wild, dark eyes as she rambled on:

"It has no crimson stain upon it, but that is on my soul. There is no atonement without sacrifice; that was the creed of my ancestors, for I am of Hebrew descent. Those grand and merciless old Israelites always avenged their wrongs, and I have avenged mine in the only way left to a helpless and deserted girl. Was it wrong to take my cause in my own hands? Don't tell me it was, for if you do I will kill myself."

Mrs. Langley listened to these wild wanderings with a chilling doubt in her mind as to whether they were not the offspring of guilt, yet she believed it impossible that Inez could have been the destroyer of Mr. Fenton. She tenderly said:

"Inez, you must not talk in such a strain as that. You have done nothing to deserve such a fate. Compose yourself, and try to remember what has lately happened."

"I do remember all too clearly. I came here to find my living lover, and I found him dead to me; this morning he is dead to all. Have you not heard that Godfrey Fenton has been sent to his account by the hand of one he had wronged? If you have not it is time that you knew it."

And she ended with a laugh that froze the blood in the listener's veins.

Mrs. Perkins came in and said:

"She has been going on that way all night, ma'am; but it doesn't mean anything. She got up once and tried to get out of the house, but I was on the watch, and I followed her and brought her back. My poor, poor child is going the way her mother went before her. She died melancholy mad, and my darling is getting in the same condition because that faithless man jilted her."

"Are you quite sure that she did not leave the house, Mrs. Perkins? Yet why do I ask such a question? Inez did not know the way to Silvermere, and she could never have been the perpetrator of what was done there last night. But it is very strange that her ravings should take this form. Come with me into the next room. I have something to tell you that she must not hear."

Mrs. Perkins followed her, and when Mrs. Langley had carefully closed the door she said:

"By what clairvoyance does that poor girl know that Godfrey Fenton is dead? It is certainly true that he was killed last night by some unknown hand."

The woman listened in horror.

"Dead—killed! and my darling talking in this strange way! Oh, Mrs. Langley, I declare to you that she never left this house through the night. I did not undress at all; I sat up the whole time watching her. I had dozed off a minute when she had got in the hall, but she did not know how to unfasten the door, and I found her standing before it with her bare feet, her hair hanging all over her. She was too weak to resist me, and I took her in my arms and brought her back again. She has been in bed ever since, and about an hour before day she fell into a sleep from which she roused just now. Don't mind anything she says, for her mind is only rambling."

"It is a singular hallucination, and under present circumstances may prove a very sad one, unless we keep it from the knowledge of others. You and I must watch over her ourselves, Mrs. Perkins, and try and bring back the light of reason to her mind. That by some inscrutable means she has become aware of Godfrey's death is evident, or she would not talk as she did just now."

"He deserved to die," said the woman, savagely; "but my poor child is as innocent of killing him as the angels in heaven. I hope you don't suspect her of such wickedness as that. She never hurt anything in her life, and she loved the ground that had man stepped on. He would have been the last one she would have injured, though he has worked her such bitter woes. I must tell you something about the Lopes family, ma'am, and then you will see that

Miss Inez has inherited a sort of second-sight from them.

"They have been a grand family in their day, Mrs. Langley, and as long as they kept with their own people they were rich and powerful; but for two generations they have married with what they call Gentiles. The father and grandfather of Miss Inez took Christian wives, Englishwomen. Well, from the date of the first marriage the old gentleman declared that he was haunted by a familiar spirit that foretold to him all the evil that was coming on him."

"He had enough, poor soul! for there are seven graves in the churchyard in Cuba, in which his children lie buried. Miss Inez's father was the only one left, and he didn't do much good in the world. After the old man died the spirit came to him, and he always knew beforehand a great deal that was going to happen to him. He was a firm believer in all their spirit-rappings that so much fuss has been made about of late years. You have heard how he sent Miss Inez to the old place to look for the will that was hidden in the wall. She did not find it, it's true, but she found the place her father described, and it's pretty certain now that it was taken from it before she went. Now her father is dead I suppose the spirit comes to her to tell her what she ought to know. That is the only way I can account for her words just now."

Mrs. Langley listened to this singular statement with incredulity, though she did not doubt the implicit faith of the narrator in its truth. She only said:

"It is very strange and may account for what Inez has said. At all events, I shall be able to evade the sad task of telling her of Godfrey's fate. Watch constantly over her, Mrs. Perkins. I must go to breakfast now, but I will bring in hers myself, and remain with her through the morning, while you gain the repose I see you so greatly need."

"Thank you, ma'am. I have hardly slept a wink, but I don't feel a bit like sleeping after hearing such news as you told me just now. I am afraid my poor darling will never get over all this trouble, and it is hard to go over with her all that I went through with her mother."

"Don't think of anything so sad as that, Mrs. Perkins. I believe that Inez will have strength to rally from the shock she has received, and recover her usual health of mind and body."

"Heaven grant it, ma'am," replied the faithful nurse, with a heavy sigh; and Mrs. Langley again entered the apartment of Inez.

She found her lying in that dreamy state which was produced by the drug she had taken; she was neither sleeping nor waking, and her heavy eyelids were not again raised.

Her visitor softly left the room and went to see if the breakfast-table was properly arranged. Mrs. Langley assumed outward composure, and when the three young men came in she greeted the visitors with grace and quiet courtesy.

The meal was eaten almost in silence, and when the sound of a carriage driving to the door was heard Mr. Denham arose and said:

"I believe that we are quite ready now, Mr. Wallis, and we may as well go at once. It is useless to defer a painful task when it must be done."

Mrs. Langley raised her pale face to the young man as he offered her his hand, and impressively said:

"If you do not bring Guy off safe, Edward, I shall never find it in my heart to forgive you for coming to my house on such an errand as brought you here last night. You are responsible for his appearance before those whose demand is blood for blood; and rather than not have it they are ready to offer up an innocent victim on the altar of public opinion. Bring my brother back to me safe and cleared from the foul imputation you and others have sought to fasten on him, or never come into my presence again."

Mr. Wallis cowered before the indignant light of her dark eyes, and he almost humbly said:

"I—I hope that everything will go right, Mrs. Langley. I meant no evil to Guy by coming here with him, you know; and an old friend was better than a stranger. I don't believe now that he did what he was accused of, and although circumstances are against him we don't give much weight to them when a man's life is at stake. He will have fair play, and—and I'm sure I hope he will pass through triumphantly."

The three went out together, but Mr. Denham came back to kiss his sister and give her a few consoling words before parting with her.

"I shall be back to dinner at the usual hour, dear Anna. I feel sure that I shall not be detained on such evidence as can be produced against me. The bitterness to me is, that I must undergo examination at all. I should doubt eternal justice if I could feel

apprehensive as to the result of my trial. Before a magistrate it will be a simple thing enough, and I shall be dismissed to recover my equanimity as I best can."

"Heaven grant that it may be so," was the fervent response, and the two parted with a tender embrace.

Mr. Denham was many years younger than Mrs. Langley, and she cherished for him an almost maternal regard.

She was tenderly devoted to him, and with good reason, for Guy had been the stay and consolation of her life when her unhappiness in the marriage state had forced her to separate from her husband.

Mrs. Langley lived abroad, and she knew no more of him than if they had never been more to each other than strangers.

In early youth she had been persuaded by others to accept him because he was a man of great wealth, and made a fine appearance in society.

He proved an ill-tempered, overbearing tyrant in his domestic relations, and as no children bound them together his wife took the bold step which released her from her intolerable bondage, and left him free to seek another if he wished to do so.

With a sinking heart Mrs. Langley saw the carriage drive away, but she rallied her courage and busied herself in arranging the breakfast of Inez upon a tray.

She took it in herself, and remained with her guest while Mrs. Perkins went and partook of the nourishment which her long vigils made her greatly need of.

CHAPTER LXXV.

THE news of the sad and tragical event had already flown far and wide, and an excited crowd of people besieged the office of the magistrate in which the examination of the supposed criminal was to take place.

Mr. Denham's personal friends, and he had many warm and influential ones, hastened to the scene of action to bear testimony to his high character, and place that in the balance against the terrible array of circumstances that seemed to point to him as the assassin.

The magistrate was in a state of great nervous trepidation. He was nearly connected with Mrs. Markland, and had only been prevented from attending the wedding by illness in his own family. He had known Guy Denham from his boyhood, and he was aware that a strong feeling of jealousy had grown up between the two lads who were dependant on her second husband.

That their differences would culminate in so dire a tragedy as this Mr. Dalton had never deemed possible, yet he was now called upon to sit in judgment upon one of whom he had hitherto known nothing but good. He had never blamed Guy for the state of feeling that existed between himself and Mr. Fenton, for he knew that he had not been fairly treated by his uncle's widow, and he also knew that in all their disputes Godfrey was usually the aggressor.

Must he condemn him—give him over to the ignominy of a trial for life and death, when he was so nearly related to the surviving children of Mrs. Markland that the stain which fell on him must also taint them? It was a most painful position in which he found himself placed, but Mr. Dalton finally determined to abide strictly by the evidence brought forward, and give his decision accordingly. He had scarcely arrived at this sensible conclusion when a knock came to the door of his private sanctum, and his clerk glibly spoke, though in a very guarded tone:

"Mr. Hastings is very anxious to see you a few moments, sir, before the case opens. The parties are in court; Mr. Denham came in with young Mr. Wallis and John Talbot. I may as well tell you, sir, that the general impression seems to be that the examination will be a mere form. Mr. Hastings himself says that it will be impossible to fix the guilt of the murderer on Mr. Denham. But of course you'll judge of that when you have heard the evidence."

"That will do, Mr. Thompson. I believe I understand what my duty is. Ask Mr. Hastings to walk in, and do you take care that I am not interrupted while he is with me."

"Yes, sir, of course, sir. He doubtless has something important to communicate to you."

"Then pray allow him to come in and tell me what it is. The time is getting on, and the hour fixed will soon be here."

The speaker's tone was slightly irritated, and with a bow the talkative young man hastened to withdraw and inform Mr. Hastings that Mr. Dalton would receive him.

He came in, carefully closed the door, and Mr.

Dalton started as he saw how old and careworn he looked. In a tone of deep sympathy he said:

"This has been a terrible shock to you, I can see, Mr. Hastings. I hope that your daughter has not suffered from it as you have, though it was a dreadful thing to have her bridegroom killed within a few hours of their union."

"My daughter lies stupefied by opiates, but when she is permitted to regain the comprehension of what is passing around her she has youth and unbroken health to sustain her. With me it is different, and this blow has fallen very heavily upon me. I feel it as you cannot comprehend; it is not only that Godfrey has been violently torn from us, but that—"

He stopped abruptly, as if he had been on the eve of inadvertently revealing the heaviest weight of care that rested on his heart.

"I understand," said Mr. Dalton. "The imputation that rests on so near a connexion of your daughter's husband is indeed hard to bear."

"It is not that—ne—it is not that, for I swear to you that I believe Guy Denham to be an innocent of all participation in this murder as I am, or you yourself are. I will do him that justice let what will come of it. I am here to-day as his friend, not as his accuser."

Mr. Hastings sat down, wiped from his brow the great drops that agitation had brought there, and Mr. Dalton regarded him with a sympathetic but puzzled face. He said:

"If you stand by Mr. Denham in this way, there is little chance that he will meet with condemnation from others. May I ask on what grounds your conviction of his innocence is based?"

"Oh, very strong ones, but I—I cannot state them in public court; neither can I explain to you why this conviction is in my own mind. Think yourself what this young man's life has been—how high-toned, even chivalrous his nature is, and you will see how impossible such a crime would be to him. There was no cause for such vengeance; angry words may have passed between him and Godfrey, but I am certain that no lasting ill-feeling followed them. There was no real cause of enmity, and Guy Denham is the last man to take so unfair an advantage of his foe, even if poor Godfrey had been such. But he was not, I repeat."

The earnestness of the speaker impressed the magistrate, but with some reserve he said:

"When I have heard the evidence I can better judge what weight to give it. Of course the high character the prisoner has hitherto borne will tell greatly in his favour."

"Yes—yes—it must save him from the shame of an indictment for Godfrey's murder. I tell you it must."

And he looked into the face of his companion with an expression that made him doubt for a few moments if he were quite sane.

Mr. Dalton coldly asked:

"Am I to understand, Mr. Hastings, that you have come here to dictate to me the course that justice should take? This seems to me a most unprecedented proceeding."

"The situation is unprecedented, Mr. Dalton. If I could tell you all, you would understand it; but I cannot. I have only this to say to you as an old friend, and one whom I have highly valued. If Guy Denham be sent from your court, branded with the charge of murder, I must do that which will bring my gray hairs to the grave in dishonour. The pistol found on the sword was his, but it has lain there in the window of my library unclaimed for months. It was taken from there by the assassin, to throw the odium of the deed upon him, I feel convinced."

"Then you must possess some clue to the real murderer, and wish to shield him. I can come to no other conclusion from your words, Mr. Hastings."

The directness of this inference unnerved Mr. Hastings, and his extreme agitation prevented him from replying for several moments. Mr. Dalton poured out a glass of water and offered it to him, and after drinking a small portion, he faintly said:

"I did not come hither to accuse another, but to do what I could to save Guy. You are to understand that what passes between us here is never to be repeated or referred to in any way. When you were a struggling young lawyer I assisted you to gain a foothold in your profession, and you have received from me many favours since that time. I refer to these things now because it is of vital importance to me to find a friend in the man before whom this case is to be tried. I tell you, Mr. Dalton, that all I value in life must be resigned if some way is not found to save this unfortunate young man."

To this appeal Mr. Dalton gravely replied:

"I will do what I honestly can to serve you, Mr. Hastings, and I admit the force of the claims you have upon me; but I cannot understand how you yourself can be so deeply implicated in this affair as your words would lead me to suppose."

"It is so; yet I cannot explain. My secret is my own; and, although it is dragging me to the grave, I cannot unfold it. Look at me: see what I have lately suffered—what I still suffer; and then, if you can add to the burden I am bearing, heaven help me! for there is no help in man."

There was silence between them for a few moments, and then Mr. Dalton said:

"This is the strongest confidence I ever received in my life."

"It is not a confidence; I am confiding nothing to you beyond the fact that this man is innocent of the crime imputed to him, and I know him to be so, though I cannot fully state the grounds on which my conviction rests. But I have said all that I came to say, and to you I must leave the rest. You would not willingly do a wrong; and to condemn Guy would be the greatest one you could commit."

Mr. Hastings arose, made an effort to steady himself upon his feet, and suddenly sank down again, feeling in his pocket in a half-dazed way for something he could not find there. With an effort, he said:

"I was nearly forgetting something that is important. I have a note for you from Mrs. Markland. I thought it was in my pocket, but I must have put it into my hat. My head isn't quite so clear this morning as it should be."

On looking into the hat the missive was found; and, wondering if his old friend had not been drinking deeply, early in the morning as it was, Mr. Dalton opened it and read the following lines:

"COUSIN JAMES.—I write these lines in a state of feeling that baffles description. How I have the courage to write at all is a mystery to me; but I must do so, suffer as I will in making the effort.

"My son—my pride, my joy—lies dead in this house destroyed by some unknown hand! I, his mother, would give half what I possess to know who committed the act that has desolated my life; but, in the frenzy of the hour, an innocent man must not be made to bear the burden of another's guilt."

"Guy Denham did not do it; he asserted his innocence over the dead body of my son in such a way as convinced me that he knew no more of the perpetrator of the deed than I do.

"Remember that I tell you this. Remember, also, how nearly he is related to my daughters—how fondly they are attached to him—and do not give them the additional sorrow of knowing that he is to be arraigned, through your decision, as the assassin of their brother."

"I shall spare no expense to discover the real criminal; and I feel assured that my nephew will aid me in every possible manner to do so, if he has freedom of action restored to him.

"Your broken-hearted cousin,
GERTRUDE MARKLAND."

Mr. Dalton read this very carefully, and after pondering a few moments said:

"Mrs. Markland takes the same view of the case you do. Did she write this without being influenced to do so?"

"If you mean, did I attempt such a thing, I answer no. I have not seen Mrs. Markland since last night, nor communicated with her in any way. I do not even know the contents of her letter."

Mr. Dalton handed it to him, and Mr. Hastings rapidly ran his eyes over the lines. As he returned them he said:

"Mrs. Markland has done what is noble and just. Deep as her anguish for the loss of her son is, she is unwilling that any injury should be inflicted on Guy. The suspicions that must cling to him will be hard enough to bear, without having his life actually placed in danger by sustaining this shameful charge."

Mr. Dalton rather coldly replied:

"I can only promise to sift the evidence very carefully, and act according to the convictions of my own mind. My position, you are aware, is a responsible one, and I must do my duty. I may find it possible to dismiss the charge without violating my own sense of right."

"That is all I can reasonably ask. I will leave you now to take my place near the prisoner."

Mr. Hastings moved slowly towards the door, with some difficulty made his way through the dense crowd already assembled in the public room, and, grasping Mr. Denham's hand, sank down in a seat beside him.

Guy was looking pale, but perfectly composed, and he gratefully said:

"I cannot too deeply thank you, Mr. Hastings, for standing by me in this painful strait. I shall never forget your goodness."

"It is all I can do for you, Guy. Others shall at least see that I have no faith in this absurd charge. Keep up your spirits, for I am sure that nothing serious can ensue."

The entrance of the magistrate caused a slight

bustle, and after he had taken his seat the proceedings commenced. I shall not describe them, for such things have been too often depicted to afford much interest to the general reader.

(To be continued.)

SCIENCE.

THE RATE OF DIFFUSION OF OXIDIZED OXYGEN INTO OXYGEN AS COMPARED WITH THAT OF CHLORINE INTO OXYGEN HAS CONFIRMED SOTZ'S THEORY THAT THE DENSITY OF OZONE IS ONE AND A HALF TIMES THAT OF OXYGEN.

AN IMPROVED CHAFING-PAN.—An improved chafing-pan has been brought out in Paris, which, instead of fuel, has a small lamp, with a flat wick, and a hollow lid filled with fine sand. When the sand is once heated the lamp maintains the temperature with a very small flame.

PURE DISTILLED WATER HAS NO ACTION ON PURE LEAD. The milkiness produced when pure lead is placed in ordinary distilled water is due to the action of the carbonate of ammonia, which this liquid contains. The corrosive effect of pure distilled water on ordinary lead containing traces of tin or silver is caused by the electro-chemical reaction of these metals.

COMPLETION OF THE MONT CENIS LINE.—The Mont Cenis line is now completed, with the exception of the St. Michel station, but the service cannot be commenced at once, owing to some of the engines not having been sufficiently tested, as part of the materials had proved of inferior quality; the company are therefore unable to open the line at present, but expect to do so very shortly.

WOOD-PULP PAPER.—The American Wood Company at Manayunk, Pennsylvania, have the largest works in the world for producing paper from wood pulp. Logs of wood, principally poplar, are cut into chips by revolving steel knives, which can cut forty cords every twenty-four hours. These chips are then boiled in alkalies and reduced to pulp. By a peculiar process of evaporation 80 per cent. of the soda used is saved, and 30,000 lb. of printing-paper is made daily.

HOW TO REMOVE FOUL AIR FROM WELLS.—Ebenezer Robinson suggested, in 1793, a very quick and simple method of removing foul air from wells, cesspools, &c. He says he found the plan to succeed even where the air was so bad that neither flame nor life could be supported. His plan was to lower a leather hose pipe into the well, and by means of a large bellows inject fresh air.

TEXTILE FROM HOP VINES.—Another discovery in the field of textile material is that of a Belgian, who has shown that a second, most valuable, and heretofore useless product can be furnished by the hop vine. After the hop blossoms have been gathered the stems are steeped like hemp; when this operation has been completed the stalks are dried, beaten with a wooden beetle, and then the threads come off easily. After carding and working in the ordinary way a very strong cloth is obtained. The thickest stalks also yield the material for several kinds of rope.

TESTING SWORD BLADES BY MACHINERY.—The Austrians fasten the sword by its hilt into a frame and submit it, with a known and adjustable velocity, to a certain number of strokes at the mid length of its edge against a block of beech wood. The sword is also subjected to a slanting or glancing blow at a given angle and velocity against the side of a cylinder of hard wood. The edge is tested by blows against a piece of wrought-iron of a given breadth, and proof of the blade's elastic temper is obtained by bending and suddenly releasing it within certain limits. The peculiarity of these trials is that the nature and extent of every test is determinative and may be made adjustable.

FLEXIBLE STONE.—A great geological curiosity has been deposited in the museum of the Hartley Institution at Southampton, consisting of a piece of flexible stone about two feet long, seven inches wide and more than one inch in thickness, having the appearance of rough sandstone, which bends with slight pressure like a piece of indiarubber or gutta-percha of the same size. It was presented to the Hartley Institution by Mr. Edward Cushing, from his relative, Mr. R. S. Munden, who obtained it from Delhi, in the East Indies. In its natural position the stone is said to run in thin layers in the soil in which it is found, but it is so rare in India that it finds a place in the museums at Calcutta. We are informed that there is a similar stone, but not so wide as the one under notice, in the British Museum, and another in the museum of the School of Mines, but specimens are very rarely to be met with. The Rev. F. Trench, of Islip, Oxford, has a piece, which he sent to the Exhibition of 1851.

THE SILENT PARTNER.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE MARRIAGE WAS ARRANGED FOR THE LATTER PART OF JULY, AND ACTIVE PREPARATIONS WERE SOON MAKING TO CROWN THE VICTIM FOR THE SACRIFICE.

MR. MARK HOLDEN, WHO HAD CARRIED A BOLD FRONT THROUGHOUT THE COMMERCIAL CRISIS, BUT WHO HAD NOT COME OUT OF IT UNSHAKEN, REJOICED AT SECURING FOR HIMSELF AN AUXILIARY WHOSE CREDIT WOULD STRENGTHEN HIS OWN, AND DIRECT AID MIGHT BE RELIED ON, IF NEEDED, IN SOME OF HIS HEAVY MONETARY TRANSACTIONS.

WE HAVE ALL READ OF SHIPS WHICH HAVE SURVIVED THE MOST VIOLENT STORMS, AND YET GONE DOWN IN A TRANQUIL SEA. SO HAVE WE SEEN MERCHANTS OUTLIVING FINANCIAL PANICS, AND YET FAILING AMIDST GENERAL PROSPERITY.

IN BOTH CASES THE END WAS BUT A DEFERRED RESULT OF CANCERS WHICH HAD CEASED TO OPERATE.

HIS LOSSES HAD BEEN IMMENSE, BUT HIS CREDIT WAS GREATER, AND HE TRUSTED TO FUTURE PROFITS TO MAKE GOOD HIS DEFICITS.

WITH MR. BURR FOR A SON-IN-LAW, PERHAPS A PARTNER, HE WOULD BE SURE TO RECOVER HIS OLD GROUND IN TIME, AND WHEN HE AGAIN REACHED THE POINT AT WHICH HIS PROSPERITY HAD BEEN CHECKED HE WOULD RETIRE.

SUCH WERE HIS CALCULATIONS, AND HE ONLY REGRETTED THAT HE HAD NOT BEEN SOONER SATISFIED. BUT HE KEPT HIS OWN COUNSEL. NONE KNEW AND FEW SUSPECTED THE EXTENT TO WHICH HE HAD BEEN CRIPPLED.

LUCY HEARD SO MUCH ABOUT HER PROPOSED GRANDMOTHER, AND SHE MET SO MANY WHO SO PLAINLY ENVIED HER LOT, THAT SHE BEGAN TO THINK IT WAS WRONG NOT TO BE HAPPY.

SHEDDING APPRECIATION WHAT ALL ABOUT HER VALUED SO HIGHLY, AND TO BELIEVE (WHAT SHE WAS TOLD) THAT THE LOVE WHICH SHE WAS CERTAIN SHE DID NOT FEEL FOR MR. BURR WOULD SURELY FOLLOW MARRIAGE.

SHE WAS BELOVED, AND THERE WAS AT LEAST A REFLECTED JOY FOR HER, DERIVED FROM THE DELIGHT WHICH HER ENGAGEMENT GAVE TO HER MOTHER AND SISTERS.

FOR HERSELF IT MATTERED LITTLE, SHE THOUGHT. SHE NEVER COULD BE HAPPY APART FROM ALFRED, BUT IT MIGHT ADD MATERIALLY TO HER MISERY TO WED ANOTHER, AND EVEN IF IT DID, WHY SHE MUST NOT CONSULT HER OWN COMFORT ALONE.

THEY MIGHT BE SOMETHING IN WEALTH AND FASHION TO COMPENSATE FOR A BROKEN HEART, AND SHE WOULD TRY IT, SINCE SHE MUST.

"I WOULD HAVE DIED FIRST," I HEAR SOME MAIDEN EXCLAIM. "SHE WAS NO HEROINE TO CONSENT TO SUCH AN IGNOMINOUS SURRENDER OF HERSELF."

NO; SHE WAS NO HEROINE. SHE WAS A GOOD, LOVING GIRL, ACCUSTOMED TO OBEY, DISTRUSTFUL OF HER OWN JUDGMENT, AND PERHAPS NOT FULLY AWARE OF HER RIGHTS, FOR, AS WE HAVE SAID, SHE WAS OF LEGAL AGE. Blame her not, fair reader, for you will soon see with what a bleeding heart she blamed herself.

OFTEN LUCY NEARLY RESOLVED TO FIND THE LEES, WHO NOW LIVED VERY NEAR THEM, AND LEARN SOMETHING ABOUT ALFRED, BUT SHE WAS ASHAMED TO DO SO.

WITH WHAT CONSISTENCY COULD SHE, THE AFFANCED BRIDE OF A REPUTED MILLIONAIRE, MAKE INQUIRIES AFTER A FORMER LOVER, WHOSE SHE HAD BEEN COMPELLED TO DISCARD ONLY FOR HIS POVERTY.

THE PROPRIETIES MUST BE OBSERVED, WHATEVER ELSE BEFELL.

BUT LUCY WAS IN THE HABIT OF READING THE NEWSPAPERS, AND ABOUT THREE WEEKS BEFORE THE DAY APPOINTED FOR HER WEDDING SHE SAW THAT FEARFUL ITEM WHICH, ALMOST AT THE SAME HOUR, HAD STRICKEN ALFRED'S MOTHER AND SISTERS WITH TERROR ALIKE TO MADNESS.

SHE WAS FOUND SWOONING IN THE BREAKFAST-ROOM WITH THE MORNING JOURNAL AT HER FEET, AND WHEN SHE WAS RESSUCITATED BY HER FRIGHTENED FRIENDS SHE Muttered, pointing shudderingly to the paper, as if it had been a basilisk:

"I HAVE MURDERED HIM!"

ALL EFFORTS TO SOOTHE HER WERE UNAVAILING.

SHE DENOUNCED HERSELF, HER PARENTS, HER AFFANCED HUSBAND IN VEHEMENT TERMS, AND WISHED THAT SHE HAD DIED BEFORE HER CRUELTY HAD DRIVEN HER LOVER TO THE WAR AND ENTAILED UPON HIM SO DREADFUL A DESTINY.

THIS MENTAL PAROXYSM LASTED SEVERAL HOURS, DURING WHICH TIME SHE BEGGED THAT HER FATHER, IF HE COULD NOT SEE HER DIE, WOULD MAKE SOME EFFORT TO AVERT ALFRED'S THREATENED FATE.

HER CONDITION WAS SO ALARMING THAT THE FRIGHTENED FATHER OBEYED HER REQUEST TO FIND THE WIDOW LEE, AND GET ALL THE INFORMATION WHICH SHE HAD ON THE DISTRESSING SUBJECT. BUT ALTHOUGH HE FOUND THE PLACE ON THE AFTERNOON OF THE DAY ON WHICH THE INTELLIGENCE WAS RECEIVED, THE FAMILY WERE ALL ALONE.

MRS. AND MISS LEE HAD LEFT A FEW HOURS BEFORE, A SERVANT SAID, AND MR. CHARLES LEE HAD BEEN ABSENT MORE THAN A WEEK.

"THEY'VE HAD DREADFUL NEWS, SIR," SAID THE GIRL, "AND THE OLD LADY IS IN AN AWFUL WAY."

MR. HOLDEN HAD THE MORE READILY DONE WHAT HE COULD

to soothe his frantic daughter, because he felt assured that all efforts to arrest Mr. Lee's fate would be vain, and that when he was out of the way, and Lucy's grief had been allowed an unrestrained flow, she would subside into more perfect acquiescence to his will than before. It might be necessary to postpone the wedding, but what was a little delay compared with the added cheerfulness and vivacity which such a course would insure in the bride?

He was surprised to find Lucy much calmer on his return, and to see that her comparative composure continued, notwithstanding he had brought her no words of hope. He did not understand that this was a natural reaction from her violent emotion, and that she was sinking into the apathy of despair.

He improved the occasion to recover his authority, and to warn her of the impropriety of exhibiting any special grief for young Mr. Lee, under her peculiar circumstances.

"We may mourn him as a friend of the family very properly," he said, with a majestic air; "but of course nothing could be more distasteful to—Mr. Burr than witness any very marked sorrow in his bride elect." (Lucy shuddered) "for the—loss of a young gentleman who was in no way related to us. You understand?"

Lucy had buried her face in her hands, but she nodded assent.

Without farther signs of insubordination, Lucy simply requested that she might be excused from seeing Mr. Burr for a few days, and this favour was readily accorded. Indeed, probably she would not have been allowed to meet him if she had desired while in such extreme dejection; for Mr. Holden thought it important to withhold from his prospective son-in-law all knowledge of what had taken place.

If he had seen the announcement about Mr. Lee in the paper he would not probably suspect that the peripled man was Miss Holden's former suitor, for he knew nothing of Alfred's having gone in the army—indeed, he knew very little about him.

A plea of slight illness sufficed for denying Lucy for a few days to her lover, whose solicitude was not awakened, but who found an excuse for sending in numerous costly presents of bouquets, books, fruits, &c., to relieve the tedium of a sick-room.

"What devotion!" exclaimed the mother. "I declare, he shows all the ardour of youth, Lucy; and really he doesn't look more than thirty-five—or so."

"And papa says that a man is young at forty," said Fanny. "Then he dresses so well—so richly, but not foppishly."

"And he talks of travelling," continued the mother. "He asked me this morning whether I would be willing to have you go to Italy for your wedding trip. Has he ever spoken to you about it?"

"No—yes, I believe so. I am not certain."

"Not certain? Why, that is strange!"

"Somebody spoke about it. I had forgotten whether it was he or father. I believe he did."

Lucy spoke in a low voice, and with an air of great indifference. She was looking out of the window.

"Oh, how I should like to go to Italy!" exclaimed Fanny. "Wouldn't you like to have me go, if papa will let me?"

"Yes."

Thus they tried to rouse her into an interest in passing and coming events, and at times they seemed momentarily to succeed.

After a few days she asked her father, evidently with an effort:

"Is it settled about Mr. Gray?"

"Yes, yes; his sentence was carried out to the letter."

"And about—about Alfred?"

"It's all over, Lucy—all past now; and what is it worse than the fate of thousands who are shot down in battle every day? Be a brave, good girl, and think no more of it."

With wonderful calmness Lucy heard this false story, and yet it was not quite a falsehood, for he fully believed that Mr. Lee had been hanged, as threatened, and he wished to have his daughter's mind set at rest on the subject, suspense being far worse for her, he believed, than certainty.

She looked earnestly into her father's eyes, and said, with a mournful but not trembling voice:

"If we had not driven him away!"

"Tut, tut! We did no such thing. He went into the army of his own free choice, as thousands of others have done. It is the fortune of war. And he has won fame. He is spoken of as a brave soldier, and now he has died for his country, and he will be praised in history. What better fate could you ask for him?"

Lucy looked steadily at her father, as if she were really trying to find balm for her wounded spirit in his words. But she did not reply.

But her father's cruelty was not at an end. When, a few days later, he heard of Mr. Lee's escape (and he

heard it with uneasiness, if not with decided regret), he withheld the news from Lucy, and forbade anyone to impart it to her.

"It will only unsettle her mind again," he said; "and if he does not return for a few weeks, as he most likely will not, we can probably keep it from her until she is married. It will be quite time enough then to tell her, and ease her conscience of the idea of having caused his death; for that, I believe, is the principal thing that ails her now."

"If that be all, we had better tell her at once," said Grace, the third daughter.

"I did not say it was all, child. I said it was the principal trouble. Neither did I ask your advice."

Grace was silenced, but indignant.

Two mornings afterwards, while the wedding preparations were still slowly progressing, and while the working-room was littered with sheets of lace, satin, and broken flowers, Lucy Holden was missing from her home.

The quiet maiden, who had so long submitted, unrepiningly, to a father's iron will, had at last gathered up spirit and run away.

CHAPTER XXV.

LUCY left the following letter in her boudoir:

"TO MY PARENTS.—I have left you for ever! Life has nothing in store for me but misery, and I can better endure my wretchedness away from these associations which constantly remind me of its cause. If heaven does not, in kindness, terminate my existence, or take from me that reason and memory which are goods and tortures to me now, perhaps the discipline of life in some obscure station may be of service to me. Whatever that discipline may be, it will be better than marrying a man I loathe, or remaining where everything reminds me of the one I have murdered. Farewell! Be assured that no efforts will avail to find me. We have parted for ever."

"LUCY."

She had taken a part of her apparel, and that chiefly the plainest.

Her best and most costly dresses, with a single exception, she had left; but she had taken all her jewellery, including a diamond pin and ring, of considerable value, which her father had given her on her twenty-first birthday, when he was in the height of his prosperity.

No one could give any account of the time or mode of her departure.

The servants, who were severally suspected of complicity in her flight, all avowed, with the most earnest protestations, an entire ignorance of her whereabouts.

The father stormed with rage at first, but, being confident of speedily discovering her retreat, he gave orders that the strictest secrecy should be maintained with regard to an event which, he considered, reflected so much disgrace upon his family. Especially was it to be kept from Mr. Burr, whose inquiries after the invalid were to be answered in the usual way, and whose daily love offerings were to be received and acknowledged in her name.

An experienced detective was employed, who laughed at the idea of his failing to find the runaway, and promised her certain return within twenty-four hours from the moment he was engaged. But, when thrice that time had elapsed without the slightest clue to the missing girl, the baffled man grew less confident, though he was still hopeful.

Mrs. Holden was in great distress, and insisted that no further secrecy should be maintained; but that advertisements should be inserted in the papers describing her daughter, and offering a large reward for her return.

"She is clearly out of her mind," she said, "and may be wandering through the streets, exposed to severe danger. She could not have had but a few pounds in money."

Mr. Holden yielded to his wife's importunities to advertise, but the preliminary step to this was to inform Mr. Burr of the true state of affairs. Yet they did not tell him all. The repugnance which Lucy had expressed towards him was, of course, carefully concealed.

"She had a tender conscience," said Mark. "And when she heard that young Mr. Lee was sentenced to death she accused herself of being the cause of his going into the army, and of all the consequences of that step. Her girlish attachment to the young man would long ago have been forgotten but for that unfortunate affair."

"But he was not hanged. He escaped!" exclaimed Mr. Burr. "Did she not know this?"

"N—no. I heard some rumour of the kind, but I did not tell her, for she had become so calm and quiet that I—I thought I had better not. I fully intended to tell her by and by."

Mr. Burr suspected all that Mr. Holden did

not tell him, and mortification was his principal emotion.

"They will know it at the clubs," he said, mentally. "The penny-a-liners will get hold of it; the town will ring with it."

He was not mistaken.

The item was served up in one of the morning papers with some very piquant sauce about "January and May—about beauty spurning gilded chains, and Mars triumphing over Mammon"—for it was intimated, of course, that the young lady had gone off with her "soldier boy."

Mr. Jedediah Burr was utterly crestfallen, and thought that he would rather have lost half his fortune than to have met with such a disgrace, a disgrace of which his fine house, with its costly furniture, was now a standing monument.

He took no part in the search for Lucy, but in reply to Mr. Holden's inquiries on the subject he intimated that he was willing to forgive and forget, if she returned within a reasonable time, which was very magnanimous on his part, the father said, and far more than the girl had any right to expect.

Let us see what had in the meantime become of Lucy. About a week before her flight, which she was then premeditating, she went to see a Miss Blythe, who had been her schoolmate at a fashionable seminary, and of whom earnest, genuine friendship she had had many convincing proofs.

To her, after exacting solemn pledges of secrecy, she told, with many tears, her whole sad story, though, unfortunately, suppressing the name of her last lover, and the particulars of his supposed dreadful death, on which she could not dwell an instant without unspeakable horror.

He had joined the army and lost his life. This was all she told her friend of his fate, but on the other points she was unreserved in her communications.

She told her of her resolve never again to see a father whose cruelty had wrought such a terrible result and insured to her a life-long distress, and whose iron will had nearly driven her into a detested union.

"I know that I cannot resist him if I remain," she said. "My only safety is in flight, on which I have fully determined. But how or where to go to begin the novel task of earning my own living, these are the questions that remain, and on these I have come to seek the advice of my friend."

When Miss Blythe ascertained that no debate of the main question would be allowed, and no advice received upon it, she set herself diligently to think how she might assist the unfortunate girl.

So successful was her search that ere Lucy's second visit she had found, by consulting advertisements, a wealthy family who were going abroad, and who wanted a governess competent to take full charge of the education of three young girls.

The head of the family was agent and joint proprietor of a manufacturing house which was about establishing a branch, and he expected to reside abroad for a series of years, perhaps for the remainder of his life.

The situation would be "permanent for five or six years" (so said the advertisement) "if the applicant gave full satisfaction."

Miss Blythe went at once to see Mrs. Allard in her friend, for she knew that nothing would suit Lucy better than such an opportunity to put the ocean at once between her and all pursuit. The result was encouraging and yet not altogether satisfactory.

She found Mrs. Allard almost in despair of getting an eligible offer in the very short time which was to intervene before they were to embark, and the lady listened with evident delight to her eulogium of Miss Holden's merits and capacity. But she was a vulgar, ignorant, over-dressed woman, whose coarseness did not even seem to be relieved by good temper, for she was both cross and suspicious.

That Lucy, with her sweet face and quiet, lady-like deportment would be very acceptable Miss Blythe did not doubt, but whether it would be an agreeable or even durable situation for her was more questionable.

"I don't want any stuck-up creatures," she said, "who will be setting themselves up to catch my sons, Miss Blythe. I want that understood in the outset. I'm very plain spoken, you see."

"I see you are," rejoined Mary Blythe, much incensed. "I don't think my friend would suit you, or rather I don't think you would suit her, if you indulge in such suspicions, even before seeing her. I will bid you good morning."

"No—don't. I daresay she may be all right. I didn't mean any offence. I only want to put her on her guard, you know, for boys are always foolish where there's a pretty face in the way; and you say your friend is handsome."

"She is!"



[LUCY'S ALARM.]

"Well, wait a minute while I call Mr. Allard, and see what he thinks about it."

The husband proved to be a gentleman of unquestionable good sense and temper, and at his request Mary consented to bring her *protégée* for inspection.

She gave ample references for herself and family; but declined to give any information about the antecedents of her friend, who, she said, must be taken, if at all, on her recommendation.

"And now, Lucy, what do you think of it?" she said, when on the ensuing day her friend had again come to see her, and she had quickly heard the whole story.

But Lucy's countenance had already answered the question.

"Nothing could be better," she said, "for it takes me out of the country and beyond their reach. Of course there will be terribly disagreeable things said about it. What of that? I had made up my mind to go out as a servant, if I could do no better."

The friends went to the Allards, and Lucy was engaged without any hesitation.

The salary was of course satisfactory, for Miss Holden would have accepted the place without pay rather than have missed it, and the sum proposed was larger than either of them expected.

When Lucy left home she went to her friend's in the night, accompanied by a servant of the Blythes, whose secrecy had been insured, and she remained there in concealment until the day of the sailing of the vessel.

Mary kept her in her own room, took her meals to her, and aided her in every way, though she never ceased to counsel her to abandon her schemes of flight, and to permit negotiations to be opened with her parents for her return, and for the abandonment of the matrimonial engagement.

"They are too much for me," Lucy would reply. "You do not know my father. No, no, I will not go back. I know that I should be married in a week, and that step would be irrevocable."

Mary proved a staunch friend. She had determined faithfully to aid Lucy to carry out her designs, unless she could be dissuaded from them by argument.

"She is of age," she said, "and has the right to decide upon and to control her own movements."

She accompanied Lucy to meet her new friends on board the vessel, where they saw the whole of the Allard family for the first time. The pupils ranged from six to ten years, and seemed to be good, well-behaved children, rather pretty. Mr. Allard was a slim man of forty-five, with the slightest sprinkling

of gray in his beard, and the lady was stoutish and sandy-haired, probably about the same age.

The sons, for whom she had expressed so much solicitude, were homely boys of eighteen and twenty—one a flop, the other rather clownish; but both seemed struck with the charms of the new governess, and while one stared rudely at her the other annoyed her with small-talk.

Though Lucy could well imagine how diligently her father was seeking her, she did not think it at all probable that he would look for her on shipboard, and she began to feel as if the ocean's width was already between them.

But she was mistaken. What faint hope drew Mr. Holden to the outgoing ship it would be difficult to say, but there he was, before Lucy's eyes, on the wharf, in a surging crowd of people—there he was, elbowed by orange-women, working his way with one side and against another, towards the passage planks which led to the vessel.

Lucy turned pale, and gave up all for lost. Visions of herself scolded and frowned into mute submission, taken home in a carriage, falling back into the old routine—the renewal of the wedding preparations—of the party, the ceremony, her dresses, her home—all flashed through her mind in an instant as something real, certain, unavoidable.

But, gaining courage, she reflected that it would require several minutes for her father to gain the deck, and without any other sign of perturbation than her pallor, and a very faint voice, she rose and asked Mr. Allard if he could tell her the number of her cabin. (She was to have one in company with two of the children.)

"Most certainly; I will show you to it," said the gentleman, looking concerned.

"How pale you are, Miss Holden! Are you ill?" asked Mrs. Allard.

"Yes—no—thank you—a little faint only. I shall be better in a few minutes."

"Are you subject to faintness?" Mr. Allard asked her as he conducted her below.

"No, sir, no. I—I have been much excited. It will pass away. Let us hurry, if you please."

Her companion felt her arm tremble within his; he saw that she looked earnestly around, and he knew she must have had a sudden alarm. That there was a mystery about Miss Holden he was aware, but as her perfect respectability had been fully vouchsafed for, he did not seek to penetrate it. Yet now it bade fair to reveal itself. Probably she was running away from her friends and she had seen someone in pursuit. Whose side should he take? He was undecided. His sympathies leaned towards anxious

parents, whose life-long love and care had perhaps been repaid by desertion in a freak of anger, for some real or fancied harshness.

Lucy saw his look of surprise and inquiry, perhaps of indecision. She knew that he might be applied to by her father for information, and she resolved to disclose to him the truth and appeal to him for protection.

This she did hurriedly and succinctly, but very forcibly, and with the added weight of tears.

"I am of age," she added, "and have the full legal and moral right to act for myself. Do not betray me, or you will make me miserable for life."

"I will not, you may depend upon me," said Mr. Allard.

He conducted her to her room, bade her lock herself in and fear nothing.

Mr. Holden, as soon as he succeeded in getting aboard, hustled around through the cabins and on the quarter-deck, peering into all feminine faces, not quite with a look of expectation, but like one who felt that he ought not to leave this slight chance untried. Next, he went to the captain, and asked to see a list of passengers. There were not many ladies. Those of Holden did not transpire; and the captain, who knew something of all his passengers, was confident of the genuineness of the names that were down.

Yet, there were the Allards, and in their party was a governess who was not otherwise designated. It was a slight chance, and Mr. Holden resolved to inquire.

He hunted them up and found them on the quarter-deck, minus the governess.

"There he comes," said the father, who had been warning his family of the danger. "We must stand by her. I shall refuse to give her up, unless he commands me."

Mr. Holden came up very politely, and, addressing Mrs. Allard, said:

"Will you excuse me, madam, for asking you a question or two about the lady who is travelling with you as governess. My object is—"

The lady reddened and looked much embarrassed as he spoke. She turned to her husband, who was about to reply, when the elder son stepped forward, and with several bows, much gesticulation, and some grimaces said:

"Je ne parle pas l'Anglais, monsieur; je ne l'entends pas. Parlez Français, s'il vous plaît, monsieur."

"Oh! the—they're parley-vous," said Mr. Holden, turning away, hopeless of making them comprehend him. "She is not among them!"

(To be continued.)



[THE FACE AGAINST THE WINDOW.]

THE FIRST SMILE.

A Christmas Story.

CHAPTER IX.

Fairest of the great creation,
Gem of beauty pure and rare;
Nature's darling and perfection,
Moulded with her choicest care.

Miss THORPE led the way up the grandly carved staircase to a circular room, in which a small picture-gallery had been arranged. There was the cracked and faded portrait of the hero of the family, the famous Captain Archibald, in his uniform, with his war-horse by his side; and there were queer-looking dames, with sleeves which looked like balloons, and caps of comical shape and height, and children oddly dressed to modern eyes. But Miss Thorpe passed them all by, and, drawing up a heavy curtain, which saved them from light and dust, showed me the pictures side by side. The father's might almost have seemed the son's portrait. There were the same handsome features, the haughty poise of the head, the proud reticence, and sensitive tenderness of the lips. Winthrop Thorpe must almost have seemed to the old friends of his father like the same man reproduced.

The bride, however, was not Evelyn. She looked more like some sweet saint, some straying angel, detained for a brief instant by the gauzy clouds woven around her, the mist-like veil trailing downwards, and for one brief instant entangling her with earthly affairs, than like an ordinary, mortal woman. I almost held my breath to gaze upon the sweet, holy smile beaming from the blue eyes, and hovering around the parted lips. The cloud of fine, spray-like hair rippling back from the pure forehead had already caught the golden light of the upper sphere.

"Is it possible that face belonged to a mortal woman?" I asked. "It seems too spiritual, too refined for our earthly life—as if soaring wings would take her to a more ethereal air."

"As they did," said the daughter, softly, a tender dew brimming in her eyes. "Oh, much as her loss must be to me, tender, holy, and priceless as I should value a mother's affection, I have never, I could never regret her early death. It seemed to me as wrong and sinful as it would be to chain down to our dismal, weary, heart-sickening earth one of the pure, bright spirits used to the white effulgence of heavenly spheres. Who can tell what sorrows might have met her—what fiery trials wrung her heart—how her innocent trust and hope might have been clogged and

chilled by the world's doubts—if she had been left here? But she was taken to the brighter home, and her children have no associations but what are bright, beautiful, and pure, like that."

She looked again, with a fond, yearning glance, at the pictured face, dropped the curtain softly with a reverent hand, and turned away.

"You shall see the other pictures another time. But I wanted you to have these fixed with your first impressions of Inglewave. Now, I suppose I must go and remove my hat, and take a peep at Imogene, to see if she be pleased with a little surprise we managed to get up in a very brief time. Her chambers are entirely changed by a new fitting-up. Winthrop, like his father, is never weary of adding to the enjoyment of those he loves. Some time or other, perhaps, I will take you into the room which has been locked and barred, with every article just as she left it on the afternoon she was taken ill. They carried her into another chamber, which she never left. Poor father! I can understand I think, the passionate devotion of grief which is not willing a careless footstep should ever come where her last moments were spent. The rooms, by my father's order, were thenceforward kept locked, and no one allowed to enter them, except the housekeeper, twice a year, to dust and air them. After his death the same custom prevailed, and when Winthrop was of age he still more sacredly enforced it. It is a solemn experience, never made tame by repetition, when I enter those dim rooms, and find her work-basket, with its pretty bit of baby embroidery, the needle rusted in the eyelet; her handkerchief fluttering from the couch; the cushion on the carpet by the easy-chair, still dented with the pressure of her foot, vase of withered flowers, a book thrown carelessly down at the page last read, a bracelet on the toilet table, and a ruffle of lace and knot of blue ribbon, slightly soiled. These bring her to me so vividly, aside from the associations of the furniture, the pictures, all of which testify of her peculiar tastes."

"Inglewave has, indeed, tender associations," said I. "No wonder you prize it so dearly."

Mr. Winthrop Thorpe, coming from the broad upper hall, saw us standing there, and said, smilingly:

"What loiterers! Still with the dust of the street hanging about you? Imogene can shame you. She is fresh and bright in new attire, and in wonderful spirits. Evidly dear, don't be too absurd. I believe that girl is a little insane about the old place. She would never weary of showing Inglewave, Mr. Holliston; so you must take yourself off, if you wish release."

"I am going—not, however, that I wish it. If Miss Thorpe will show me the gardens likewise, I think I shall be satisfied for once with enchantment."

"You are enthusiastic, and therefore make a delightful listener for my sister. I have noticed how similar your tastes are. It is a rare treat for her to be so indulged, but you must be wary, or she will task you too severely. She would drag a willing victim from one end of the estate to the other half a dozen times a day, I do believe."

"Now I am slandered, Winthrop. You know I do not dote on Inglewave more extravagantly than you do, only you hide the feeling in your reticent pride, and I show it plainly wherever I find a sympathetic listener," returned his sister, with an arch nod, and, skimming lightly across the hall, vanished through a carved doorway.

Two weeks of rare, golden enjoyment such as I had vaguely dreamed about, but never before experienced, followed. More than once I paused, asking myself if I were not under the delusion of a lotus-eater's dream, it was so lovely, peaceful and rich with the purest happiness.

Mrs. Thorpe improved as by a magic spell. We four rode in the dewy mornings along tangled byways, following the mossy river bank; cantered gaily on mettlesome but obedient horses over the highways, under a wondrous moon; slipped lazily on the river's current in a tiny boat, beneath the golden effulgence of mid-day, and filled up the hours between with books, music, and fairy-like banquets, until I almost lost my own identity and forgot the weary, work-day world lying outside and the intricate, unhappy problem waiting my solution—and seeming to assure myself of some generous spell which had sundered me from the vexing vortex of care, and drifted my bark upon the peaceful, lovely stream of joy and rest. I did not wonder or disturb myself at all, though no tidings came of the packet for which I had waited so feverishly a little time before.

I was not impatient that all John Marvin's surveillance failed to discover any farther communication between Roma and the escaped Gaspard; or that my vaunted ability found no positive proofs to show to my patron.

I was lost in the intoxication of dreamy delight. I think the others shared the mood. Mr. Thorpe had tacitly accepted me for his friend, I argued, or he would never have consented that I should so thoroughly enter into the family harmony.

He did not heed me at all now, though I came upon



[LUCY'S ALARM.]

"Well, wait a minute while I call Mr. Allard, and see what he thinks about it."

The husband proved to be a gentleman of unquestionable good sense and temper, and at his request Mary consented to bring her *protégée* for inspection.

She gave ample references for herself and family; but declined to give any information about the antecedents of her friend, who, she said, must be taken, if at all, on her recommendation.

"And now, Lucy, what do you think of it?" she said, when on the ensuing day her friend had again come to see her, and she had quickly heard the whole story.

But Lucy's countenance had already answered the question.

"Nothing could be better," she said, "for it takes me out of the country and beyond their reach. Of course there will be terribly disagreeable things said about it. What of that? I had made up my mind to go out as a servant, if I could do no better."

The friends went to the Allards, and Lucy was engaged without any hesitation.

The salary was of course satisfactory, for Miss Holden would have accepted the place without pay rather than have missed it, and the sum proposed was larger than either of them expected.

When Lucy left home she went to her friend's in the night, accompanied by a servant of the Blythes, whose secrecy had been insured, and she remained there in concealment until the day of the sailing of the vessel.

Mary kept her in her own room, took her meals to her, and aided her in every way, though she never ceased to counsel her to abandon her schemes of flight, and to permit negotiations to be opened with her parents for her return, and for the abandonment of the matrimonial engagement.

"They are too much for me," Lucy would reply. "You do not know my father. No, no, I will not go back. I know that I should be married in a week, and that step would be irrevocable."

Mary proved a staunch friend. She had determined faithfully to aid Lucy to carry out her designs, unless she could be dissuaded from them by argument.

"She is of age," she said, "and has the right to decide upon and to control her own movements."

She accompanied Lucy to meet her new friends on board the vessel, where they saw the whole of the Allard family for the first time. The pupils ranged from six to ten years, and seemed to be good, well-behaved children, rather pretty. Mr. Allard was a slim man of forty-five, with the slightest sprinkling

of gray in his beard, and the lady was stoutish and sandy-haired, probably about the same age.

The sons, for whom she had expressed so much solicitude, were homely boys of eighteen and twenty—one a flop, the other rather clownish; but both seemed struck with the charms of the new governess, and while one stared rudely at her the other annoyed her with small-talk.

Though Lucy could well imagine how diligently her father was seeking her, she did not think it at all probable that he would look for her on shipboard, and she began to feel as if the ocean's width was already between them.

But she was mistaken. What faint hope drew Mr. Mark Holden to the outgoing ship it would be difficult to say, but there he was, before Lucy's eyes, on the wharf, in a surging crowd of people—there he was, elbowed by orange-women, working his way with one tide and against another, towards the passage planks which led to the vessel.

Lucy turned pale, and gave up all for lost. Visions of herself scolded and frowned into mute submission, taken home in a carriage, falling back into the old routine—of the renewal of the wedding preparations—of the party, the ceremony, her dresses, her home—all flashed through her mind in an instant as something real, certain, unavoidable.

But, gaining courage, she reflected that it would require several minutes for her father to gain the deck, and without any other sign of perturbation than her pallor, and a very faint voice, she rose and asked Mr. Allard if he could tell her the number of her cabin. (She was to have one in company with two of the children.)

"Most certainly; I will show you to it," said the gentleman, looking concerned.

"How pale you are, Miss Holden! Are you ill?" asked Mrs. Allard.

"Yes—no—thank you—a little faint only. I shall be better in a few minutes."

"Are you subject to faintness?" Mr. Allard asked her as he conducted her below.

"No, sir, no. I—I have been much excited. It will pass away. Let us hurry, if you please."

Her companion felt her arm tremble within his; he saw that she looked earnestly around, and he knew she must have had a sudden alarm. That there was a mystery about Miss Holden he was aware, but as her perfect respectability had been fully vouch'd for, he did not seek to penetrate it. Yet now it bade fair to reveal itself. Probably she was running away from her friends and she had seen someone in pursuit. Whose side should he take? He was undecided. His sympathies leaned towards anxious

parents, whose life-long love and care had perhaps been repaid by desertion in a freak of anger, for some real or fancied harshness.

Lucy saw his look of surprise and inquiry, perhaps of indecision. She knew that he might be applied to by her father for information, and she resolved to disclose to him the truth and appeal to him for protection.

This she did hurriedly and succinctly, but very forcibly, and with the added weight of tears.

"I am of age," she added, "and have the full legal and moral right to act for myself. Do not betray me, or you will make me miserable for life."

"I will not, you may depend upon me," said Mr. Allard.

He conducted her to her room, bade her lock herself in and fear nothing.

Mr. Holden, as soon as he succeeded in getting aboard, hustled around through the cabins and on the quarter-deck, peering into all feminine faces, not quite with a look of expectation, but like one who felt that he ought not to leave this slight chance untried. Next, he went to the captain and asked to see a list of passengers. There were not many ladies. The name of Holden did not transpire; and the captain, who knew something of all his passengers, was confident of the genuineness of the names that were down.

Yet, there were the Allards, and in their party was a governess who was not otherwise designated. It was a slight chance, and Mr. Holden resolved to inquire.

He hunted them up and found them on the quarter-deck, minus the governess.

"There he comes," said the father, who had been warning his family of the danger. "We must stand by her. I shall refuse to give her up, unless he commands me."

Mr. Holden came up very politely, and, addressing Mrs. Allard, said:

"Will you excuse me, madam, for asking you a question or two about the lady who is travelling with you as governess. My object is—"

The lady reddened and looked much embarrassed as he spoke. She turned to her husband, who was about to reply, when the elder son stepped forward, and with several bows, much gesticulation, and some grimaces said:

"Je ne parle pas l'Anglais, monsieur; je ne l'entends pas. Parlez Français, s'il vous plaît, monsieur."

"Oh! the—they're parley-vous," said Mr. Holden, turning away, hopeless of making them comprehend him. "She is not among them!"

(To be continued.)



[THE FACE AGAINST THE WINDOW.]

THE FIRST SMILE.

A Christmas Story.

CHAPTER IX.

Fairest of the great creation,
Gem of beauty pure and rare;
Nature's darling and perfection,
Moulded with her choicest care.

MISS THORPE led the way up the grandly carved staircase to a circular room, in which a small picture-gallery had been arranged. There was the cracked and faded portrait of the hero of the family, the famous Captain Archibald, in his uniform, with his war-horse by his side; and there were queer-looking dames, with sleeves which looked like balloons, and caps of conical shape and height, and children oddly dressed to modern eyes. But Miss Thorpe passed them all by, and, drawing up a heavy curtain, which saved them from light and dust, showed me the pictures side by side. The father's might almost have seemed the son's portrait. There were the same handsome features, the haughty poise of the head, the proud reticence, and sensitive tenderness of the lips. Winthrop Thorpe must almost have seemed to the old friends of his father like the same man reproduced.

The bride, however, was not Evelyn. She looked more like some sweet saint, some straying angel, detained for a brief instant by the gauzy clouds woven around her, the mist-like veil trailing downwards, and for one brief instant entangling her with earthly affairs, than like an ordinary, mortal woman. I almost held my breath to gaze upon the sweet, holy smile beaming from the blue eyes, and hovering around the parted lips. The cloud of fine, spray-like hair rippling back from the pure forehead had already caught the golden light of the upper sphere.

"Is it possible that face belonged to a mortal woman?" I asked. "It seems too spiritual, too refined for our earthly life—as if soaring wings would take her to a more ethereal air."

"As they did," said the daughter, softly, a tender dew brimming in her eyes. "Oh, much as her loss must be to me, tender, holy, and priceless as I should value a mother's affection, I have never, I could never regret her early death. It seemed to me as wrong and sinful as it would be to chain down to our dismal, weary, heart-sickening earth one of the pure, bright spirits used to the divine effulgence of heavenly spheres. Who can tell what sorrows might have met her—what fiery trials wrung her heart—how her innocent trust and hope might have been clogged and

chilled by the world's doubts—if she had been left here? But she was taken to the brighter home, and her children have no associations but what are bright, beautiful, and pure, like that."

She looked again, with a fond, yearning glance, at the pictured face, dropped the curtain softly with a reverent hand, and turned away.

"You shall see the other pictures another time. But I wanted you to have these fixed with your first impressions of Inglewave. Now, I suppose I must go and remove my hat, and take a peep at Imogene, to see if she be pleased with a little surprise we managed to get up in a very brief time. Her chambers are entirely changed by a new fitting-up. Winthrop, like his father, is never weary of adding to the enjoyment of those he loves. Some time or other, perhaps, I will take you into the room which has been locked and barred, with every article just as she left it on the afternoon she was taken ill. They carried her into another chamber, wh ch she never left. Poor father! I can understand I think, the passionate devotion of grief which v's not willing a careless footstep should ever come where her last moments were spent. The rooms, by my father's order, were thenceforward kept locked, and no one allowed to enter them, except the housekeeper, twice a year, to dust and air them. After his death the same custom prevailed, and when Winthrop was of age he still more sacredly enforced it. It is a solemn experience, never made tame by repetition, when I enter those dim rooms, and find her work-basket, with its pretty bit of baby embroidery, the needle rusted in the eyelet; her handkerchief fluttering from the couch; the cushion on the carpet by the easy-chair, still dented with the pressure of her foot, a vase of withered flowers, a book thrown carelessly down at the page last read, a bracelet on the toilet table, and a ruffle of lace and knot of blue ribbon, slightly soiled. These bring her to me so vividly, aside from the associations of the furniture, the pictures, all of which testify of her peculiar tastes."

"Inglewave has, indeed, tender associations," said I. "No wonder you prize it so dearly."

Mr. Winthrop Thorpe, coming from the broad upper hall, saw us standing there, and said, smilingly:

"What loiterers! Still with the dust of the street hanging about you? Imogene can shame you. She is fresh and bright in new attire, and in wonderful spirits. Ewy dear, don't be too absurd. I believe that girl is a little insane about the old place. She would never weary of showing Inglewave, Mr. Holiston; so you must take yourself off, if you wish release."

"I am going—not, however, that I wish it. If Miss Thorpe will show me the gardens likewise, I think I shall be satisfied for once with enchantment."

"You are enthusiastic, and therefore make a delightful listener for my sister. I have noticed how similar your tastes are. It is a rare treat for her to be so indulged, but you must be wary, or she will task you too severely. She would drag a willing victim from one end of the estate to the other half a dozen times a day, I do believe."

"Now I am slandered, Winthrop. You know I do not dote on Inglewave more extravagantly than you do, only you hide the feeling in your reticent pride, and I show it plainly wherever I find a sympathetic listener," returned his sister, with an arch nod, and, skimming lightly across the hall, vanished through a carved doorway.

"Two weeks of rare, golden enjoyment such as I had vaguely dreamed about, but never before experienced followed. More than once I paused, asking myself if I were not under the delusion of a lotus-eater's dream, it was so lovely, peaceful and rich with the purest happiness.

Mrs. Thorpe improved as by a magic spell. We four rode in the dewy mornings along tangled byways, following the mossy river bank; cantered gaily on mettlesome but obedient horses over the highways, under a wondrous moon; slipped lazily on the river's current in a tiny boat, beneath the golden effulgence of mid-day, and filled up the hours between with books, music, and fairy-like banquets, until I almost lost my own identity and forgot the weary, work-day world lying outside and the intricate, unhappy problem waiting my solution—and seeming to assure myself of some generous spell which had snatched me from the vexing vortex of care, and drifted my bark upon the peaceful, lovely stream of joy and rest. I did not wonder or disturb myself at all, though no tidings came of the packet for which I had waited so feverishly a little time before.

I was not impatient that all John Marvin's surveillance failed to discover any farther communication between Rona and the escaped Gaspard; or that my vaunted ability found no positive proofs to show to my patron.

I was lost in the intoxication of dreamy delight. I think the others shared the mood. Mr. Thorpe had tacitly accepted me for his friend, I argued, or he would never have consented that I should so thoroughly enter into the family harmony.

He did not heed me at all now, though I came upon

them with Mrs. Thorpe's beautiful head resting upon his shoulder, her fair hand clasped in his, any more than he shrank from Evelyn's observation. They talked lovingly and confidentially in my presence. In all things their demeanour was like that towards a dear friend or beloved brother, so that even I vaguely wondered if Mr. Thorpe had forgotten that my presence as a guest was rather in a business form.

They were more like lovers than married people. We said so with a furtive smile many a time, Evelyn and I, as we strolled away from them into the garden, leaving him decking her hair with the fairest blossoms, or when we cantered over the breezy slopes, while they lingered, talking so earnestly that the reins slackened, and their agitated animals went lagging slowly upon the road.

"It is very beautiful," I said, more than once, and ended with a sigh.

Evelyn echoed the sentiment and sighed, and always a faint colour stole over her cheeks.

And once she said, with sudden energy, her eyes steadily on my face:

"Oh, Mr. Holliston, I would rather bear any trouble, it seems to me, than that anything should happen to distract Winthrop's love and admiration for his wife."

"It must not happen!" returned I, equally earnest. "The little misunderstanding about Bona seems happily settled."

"Bona has been extremely well behaved of late. I think Imogene must have cautioned her against exhibiting that arrogant defiance of hers. But you are right. Will you listen to this one suggestion? Whatever you may discover in your researches, oh, I beg of you, if it has any reflection that can abate one iota of his pride in Imogene, bury it in your own breast."

"If I discover—then you think—" stammered I.

She smiled archly as she answered:

"I have known why you made this visit for several days. A letter from Mr. White to my brother, which he inadvertently gave me to read, explained to me what was a little mystery at first."

"I am so thankful that you know it," exclaimed I. "I shall no longer feel like a man in a false position. Now you know that I am neither wealthy nor of high family, that all I shall have to boast about will be my own individual earnings."

"That is all any man should have a right to claim," she answered, mildly. "And his value should be decided, not by his standing or possessions, but by his worth as a man."

"I would the world hold to such a verdict," answered I. "But I am thankful you know the truth. I shall no longer feel like an impostor in your presence."

CHAPTER X.

Oh, language scarcely can express
Affection's thrilling tenderness,
With all its hallowed grace;
As 'tis a bliss beyond control
That only animates the soul,
Invisible to trace.

Mrs. THORPE was so much improved that she was able to mingle again in society, and we had a grand dinner-party during the third week of our residence at Inglewave.

Winthrop Thorpe's pride must have been fully gratified that day. She exceeded all my anticipations. Magnificently beautiful, she was elegantly dressed, and the vivacity and grace of her manners were certainly unsurpassed by anything I had ever witnessed. There were several distinguished gentlemen present, one of whom had attended both English and French courts, and his admiration was most plainly manifested. I interpreted easily the proud, almost idolatrous look which shone in the host's eye whenever he turned towards his wife.

But the glance she returned was more of an enigma. Somehow humility and pain were visible, notwithstanding her evident gratification at pleasing him and reflecting honour on the name he had given her. It seemed to say, "Be proud, be happy while you can. Enjoy to the utmost the brilliancy of the bubble which must burst so soon!"

I felt vexed with myself that this melancholy warning should have occurred to me, and turned away my dazzled eye to find its usual refreshment in Evelyn's calm innocence. She was listening smilingly to the earnest conversation of a fine-looking man just returned, as I understood, from abroad.

Mr. Winthrop Thorpe close beside me whispered: "I hope you are pleased with that gentleman. It is the warmest hope I have concerning my sister that she should look favourably upon the suit he urges."

I heard the words distinctly; but after they were uttered I seemed to hear nothing else but a confused noise, while my head seemed spinning like a top, and my heart—it had sunk so like a lump of lead that

there was scarcely action enough to give me power of breath.

I suppose I must have looked strange, for Mr. Thorpe stared at me for a moment with a dilation of his finely cut nostrils, a curl of the upper lip, which I had learned to know as proof of his haughty indignation. I sat like a block in my seat, the cold dew gathering on my forehead. I think I must have been very pale, for he poured out a glass of wine hastily, and set it before me.

I drank it mechanically, and then summoned up all my fortitude to hide my agitation and appear calm enough to save Mr. Thorpe's table from disgrace. Turning to the neighbour at my left-hand, I began a conversation about which I can only recollect that I laughed a good deal, and essayed to be comic.

I caught Evelyn's eye upon me once or twice with a nervous questioning in it, but I averted mine hastily.

"Why had I been so blind until it was too late? I loved her, this fine gentleman would win her, and all the brightness and beauty of my youthful hopes would vanish. I was out of my lotus dream now, and thoroughly, miserably awake to the realities before me. In the midst of the gay talk and laughing badmidge going on around me I was cursing the hour when Charley White tempted me into this sphere, which I ought to have known was not fit for one like myself. I was thinking wildly and fiercely of a score of plans to raise myself to fortune. And then returned vividly the recollection of the expectation Adam Sharp had raised. I was feverishly awake now to the importance of bungling up the evidence. I was ready to curse my own insensitivity in allowing those weeks to slip by without looking into the reasons for the non-appearance of those papers.

What if they had been forwarded, miscarried, and were irretrievably lost to me? I was inexplicably relieved when at last the signal was given for leaving the table and retreating to the drawing-room, and readily availed myself of the privilege I had hitherto assumed of retiring with the ladies.

I opened the dining-room door for them, then closed it from the outside, and was turning towards the staircase when Evelyn came out hastily and laid her hand restrainingly upon my shoulder.

"Do not go, Mr. Holliston—at least not until you tell me what has happened."

"Nothing has happened, Miss Thorpe," returned I, awkwardly and stupidly.

Her clear blue eyes were full upon my face.

"I don't understand it," she said, more to herself than to me. "I am very sure that Winthrop told you something which disturbed you very much, for I saw your face blanch even while he was speaking. And yet you affirm it is nothing."

"And I spoke falsely!" exclaimed I, in a low but vehement tone. "It was more to me than if a thunderbolt had fallen beside me. He told me, Miss Thorpe, that the gentleman beside you had his warmest wishes for the success of his suit for your hand. It was all he said, but it showed me the darling hope of my own heart. It made me wish I had never come to this place. It struck out the beauty and brightness of my future life, for I love you, Miss Thorpe. I suppose you will think me ridiculously presumptuous, but I cannot help it. And I wish—oh, I almost wish I were dead."

I knew what intense bitterness there was in my tone, for I felt it all at my heart.

She had flushed crimson and then turned pale, but her eyes shone clearly and steadily.

"Mr. Holliston, I think you wrong yourself by being so dejected. I think there is no more reason for you to be so tragically disengaged than there is for Mr. Lawrence. My brother's wishes are well enough, but they would never influence me in so important a matter."

She said this so sweetly, a moisture in her eye, an arch smile on her lips, and such genuine kindness in her whole expression, that I longed to fling myself at her feet, but instead I repeated slowly, almost sulily:

"I read your brother's face accurately. He is enraged and angry at my audacity. I shall go away at once. If only I had never come!"

She stood a moment still hesitating, then suddenly looked up into my face.

"Mr. Holliston, there is an old adage methinks you would do well to remember. I shall leave you to guess what it is."

Something in her looks far beyond her words thrilled me with a wild, glad joy. I tried to speak another word, but with cheeks dyed with scarlet she slipped through the door-way, and I ran upstairs to my chamber to collect my thoughts, and recover from the feverish bewilderment which made my brain burn and throb.

An hour afterwards I walked into the drawing-room cool and tolerably calm. I had regained

my self-respect. After all, why, if only Mr. Adam Sharpe's conjectures were true, had I not a right to offer my suit as boldly as any other of Miss Thorpe's suitors?

I found the company scattered in little groups. I knew Evelyn saw me by the soft pink which gathered upon her cheeks, and I took advantage of a momentary break in the circle around her to approach her side.

"Miss Thorpe," whispered I, upon the first opportunity, "I have thought of a proverb which has helped me out of despair. Don't deny that it is the one you suggested, if you have any compassion in your heart."

Still flushed, and playing nervously with her bracelet, she answered:

"How can I say, if I do not know the proverb?"

"I beg your pardon. Let me whisper, for I dare not speak it aloud under your brother's eye. But this is the cheering, wise, delightful saying—I could write it in letters of gold: 'Faint heart never won fair ladies!'" And as I bent nearer I added, more earnestly: "Oh, Miss Thorpe, only tell me it was this you meant, and I have heart for anything."

"I will not deny that I have much faith in courage and self-respect," answered she, and her smile said more than the words.

"Heaven bless you!" faltered I, but looking up I caught Mr. Winthrop Thorpe's eye upon me, and unconsciously I lifted my head defiantly. I guessed by the look which crossed his face that I should hear from him as soon as the company was gone.

He came to me in the evening and invited me into the library. I saw Mrs. Thorpe's eyebrows raised in surprise—not at the invitation, of course, but at the coolness of the tone in which he spoke. But I was likewise aware that Evelyn flushed indignantly, made a movement as if to rise and follow us; and then, with a single answering assurance to my mate inquiry, she sank back into her seat. I was brave accordingly. I followed quietly, and remained standing, even though he pointed towards a seat.

He found it rather difficult to commence the subject, and I gave him no assistance.

He broke two or three penholders which he had taken from the writing-table before he found words in which to commence.

"Mr. Holliston, I have been thinking to-day that I have been extremely careless, culpably negligent, in not having a thorough understanding with you. I know very well I was imprudent in throwing a susceptible young man into the society of a young lady like my sister. Late it now, but it only occurred to me to-day, when a peculiar look on your face showed me the shock my intelligence of her probable engagement gave you. I am very sorry, indeed, but I trust my warning will come in season to prevent any serious unhappiness. I have made you like one of the family, not only because it carried out appearances, but because I really enjoy your society. Nevertheless, I trusted to your honour that you would not forget the distinction of birth and position which must separate you effectually from my sister."

"Sir," answered I, respectfully, but firmly, "you need not argue from supposable cases. The mischief is done now. I love Miss Thorpe with my whole heart. Let us, if you please, look at the case from that decided point of view. I love Miss Thorpe, and it is impossible for me to learn to unlove. It is the highest object of my ambition to win her for my wife."

He bit his lips, trying to restrain his anger.

"I am very sorry, Mr. Holliston. You ought to know that such a union is entirely hopeless."

"Is anything hopeless, Mr. Thorpe? May not a man who has worth in his soul, ready hands, and keen wit, rise to any goal?"

"That means when the prize sought is fortune, wealth, fame possibly. But for one in your station to hope for a union with the daughter of a family like ours! Once again I say, Mr. Holliston, that it is impossible. I trust you will not press me to say anything farther."

"Indeed, sir, I should be a poor lover if I allowed myself to be disheartened by such an argument. In the first place, what is my station, Mr. Thorpe?"

"I heard your whole history from Mr. White before you came here. It was that which made me feel so secure. I did not dream you could be so absurd, to use the least offensive word."

"I admit that at present I am poor. I have not however told you of a brighter prospect opening before me, a claim which I am convinced I shall be able to present and win. I propose to go to work in earnest over it, and if I find it what I anticipate, I shall venture to lay before Miss Thorpe my proposal of marriage."

"Preposterous!" muttered Mr. Thorpe, breaking another penholder, and dinging the fragments on the table. "Once for all, Mr. Holliston, I wish you

to understand that this thing is beyond the reach of possibility. I liked you and I treated you in a friendly manner. Don't let me repent of it, I beg of you. For all you may imagine to the contrary, I am very proud and very stubborn."

I realized it as I looked up at his gleaming eye, the curling nostril, the red lips biting nervously to keep back the roused wrath.

"But if I win my way and Miss Evelyn loves me, I shall not let your pride produce my misery," said I, firmly.

"Evelyn Thorpe, my sister, have you—it is too much! Farther forbearance is weakness," exclaimed he, snapping the last unfortunate penholder in those white, soft fingers of his.

And then a light seemed to kindle in his eyes and overspread his whole face. He pulled out his pocket-book, and hastily drew forth a five-hundred-pound bank-note.

"There, take it. It is part of what you were to receive in case you successfully carried through the task I set you. Take it and go. I am humiliated and ashamed that I have been so mistaken in your character!"

I stood looking disdainfully at the money, and yet he did not guess how welcome it would be to enable me to undertake the affair which Mr. Sharpe had brought before my notice.

"I will certainly go, Mr. Thorpe. I hope you do not quite mean the insult which the offer of that money implies. But I must speak to Miss Thorpe, and give her the particulars of this interview."

"I cannot allow it. Not that I have any fears of my sister's decision; but it is my duty, as her sole relative and guardian, to spare her any annoyance. She has too much of the Thorpe pride in her nature to look upon your conduct as anything but that of insolence."

His words were not intemperate. A man of his refinement could never use coarse or unworthy language even in passion. But his tone was shaken by his anger, and his countenance was all abashed.

I bowed silently, and had just unclosed my lips for a respectful adieu, when a servant knocked at the door.

Mr. Thorpe opened it.

"A note, sir, from the bank. The messenger said he would wait for your reply, as it was important."

Mr. Thorpe tore it open with a face which grew exceedingly grave and annoyed. He took out a cheque which had been enclosed, carried it to the light, and examined it critically. He turned presently to me, in the excitement of this new intelligence, quite forgetting that he had just dismissed me.

"Mr. Holliston, here's explanation of our past mystery, explanation with a vengeance. A cheque has been presented at the bank with my signature, and a third of my deposits there taken away. What's to be done? In making up the monthly balance the cheque had a singular look and excited the book-keeper's suspicion."

"I don't see that my advice can be of any importance, sir. I am going to leave your house to-night."

The sudden look of annoyance, mortification, and chagrin which came over his face was almost ludicrous.

"I had forgotten—I beg your pardon. But—"

He came to a dead pane, and took two or three turns across the room, then came back, the look of his eye showing what it cost him to retract from his first position.

"But, Mr. Holliston, I can't see how anyone else can take up the affair now. I should be very glad to have you finish it, since you have begun. Let us forget everything we have said to-night, except, of course, you will remember that my sentiments are unchanged with regard to my sister. Here is a fresh fact to start with. This cheque is the identical one which was so mysteriously lost from my table that day we left town. I had endorsed it for Armand to carry to the bank. A cipher has been skilfully added, and has thus changed the sum to thousands. Ah, I see a gleam of intelligence on your face."

"Yes, sir. I remember now that Rona stopped at the bank in a carriage that very day before we left town."

"Rona again!" he muttered, discontentedly.

I had lean pity for him, remembering his hardness with me, and I replied, promptly:

"Yes, sir, Rona, and Rona with accomplices, probably two, positively one. Yes, sir, if you wish it I will finish this affair for you. It is honourable that I should, and I will do it, let it wound my pride—which possibly may be as sensitive as yours, Mr. Thorpe—much as it may. And I will go into it now with all my energy. You wish me to sir, do you not, no matter whom it exposes?"

"Yes," answered he, slowly and reluctantly. "It has come to such a pass that there is no safety without. I shall be very sorry to pain my wife with the proof of her favourite's dishonesty. But there is no other course open to me."

"Nor to me," muttered I. "I must draw this affair to an end and go about my own business." And I hunted up John Marvin, and we had a long and earnest talk.

The next morning I departed for town before any of the family came down to breakfast. If it had not been that I had a secret conviction that I had won Evelyn's love, I should have despised myself heartily for the indolence and culpable neglect of the few last weeks. I was determined to atone for it now. I went first to my deserted office. What a chill the damp, dusty room struck upon me as I entered. I examined the letter-box carefully. Only half a dozen letters, and those dunning for unpaid bills. I sighed heavily as I thrust them back, shivered as I put on my hat; and, locking the door, walked away. Then I went over to the Thorpe mansion, frightening the single servant keeping guard there with my violent ring. Had anything been left there for me, a packet, a small parcel of any kind? I had left word that it should be sent to Ingleside on its arrival, but possibly it might have been overlooked.

"A small packet! why, yes, it came about a week after you left. But the gentleman I saw in your room one day came for it. I supposed you sent him for it. He took it away."

I ground down a malediction.

"Did he not leave any word—any letter?"

"No, sir, but he wrote on a book in your room. He opened the packet there."

I did not stop for farther questioning, but ran upstairs, caught up the book lying in a conspicuous place, and read the scrawl on the blank leaf:

"All right! I will manage your case. I have the first presentation of the facts, I need, to obtain the reward. Will keep you advised.—SHARPE."

"Sharpe indeed!" muttered I, angrily; "to think how I meant to keep the thing out of his hands, and he has just taken it so completely into them. I'll warrant he'll fleece me well! But this settles the thing."

And at that reflection my spirits rose. My sweet, gentle Evelyn; high bred and delicately reared, and nobly born as she might be, I could ask for her without a blush now, even of Winthrop Thorpe.

The next thing was to find Mr. Sharpe himself and my precious packet of testimony. It made my blood boil to think he had dared to pursue those sacred pages before they met my eye, and perhaps it was well for him that I found the rooms he had taken in the house rented by another lodger. The gentleman had left town, the landlady said.

I went down to the police-office to hear what had become of Gaspard.

The case was at a dead stand. They had tracked him twice, but just as they thought to pounce upon him he had disappeared in the most perplexing manner.

It was very certain that he had plenty of money, or influential friends.

The impression seemed to prevail that he had left town now, but a close watch was still kept. While I was still talking a report came in on the very case.

A policeman had come upon him, dressed as a woodman, making his way towards the suburbs the previous evening. He had followed quietly, and watched his movements, fully convinced that it was the long-watched-for fugitive from justice.

It seemed that the fellow became aware of the surveillance, for, suddenly dropping his implements, he made a flying leap, cleared a fence and was off. The policeman drew his revolver and fired, wounding him, it is quite certain, for they found the drops of blood a little way farther on. And then once again he was lost sight of. I asked anxiously what time it happened.

"Between eight and nine when we gave up the search. Just the commencement of the evening when I first saw him," answered the policeman. "He undoubtedly intended to represent a countryman who had come into town for work, returning home. But we are trained to see anything suspicious, and I was sure he wasn't all right."

I took up my hat.

"I shall call again to hear about it. Now I must proceed to my present stopping-place as soon as possible."

And at dinner time I presented myself at Ingleside.

I looked eagerly, although furtively, at Mrs. Thorpe when she made her appearance. Her face was as bright and clear as a June morning. She seemed in gay spirits than ever, which was something of a relief, for Evelyn was silent, and Mr. Thorpe

grave and preoccupied, and I had adopted a ceremonious demeanour which I knew was supremely ridiculous; but I had not yet recovered from my anger at Winthrop Thorpe's prejudice.

After dinner I found means to get a look at Rona Zagonini. Her face was likewise free from care and anxiety.

"There has been no report from Gaspard yet," said I to myself, "which proves that I am in time."

Evelyn found opportunity to ask a few questions before she entered the drawing-room. Lingering there in the hall, I hurriedly related what her brother had said to me, and my replies.

A pride that was nobler than Winthrop Thorpe's arched her neck and flashed from her eyes.

"You are right," she said. "It is a shame to ask of lineage or fortune. There is only one investigation proper, and that is into the character. I hope you will not think me unmaidenly, but I assure you my faith in you is so unbounded that nothing my brother can say need be discouraging to you."

I had only time to give her a grateful glance when Mrs. Thorpe came out from the library, where she had been for a moment with her husband, who was going to town on tiresome business, to remain that night, she said.

She saw him ride away, and then came back slowly with a pensive face.

Evelyn had gone upstairs, but I was still standing before the Italian picture.

"Come," said she. "I do not think you and I have enjoyed a *tête-à-tête* since our acquaintance. Come into my little retreat."

And she led the way into a cozy, octagon room, built out from a wing of the main building.

It was hardly time for lights when we entered. Mrs. Thorpe sat down in an easy-chair, wheeled into a bay window, and I took a seat at a becoming distance.

"I don't know that I ought to say it, Mr. Holliston," said she, abruptly, "but I am really very sorry for you."

"Sorry!" stammered I, "for what?"

"My husband told me, although it did not require much penetration to find it out for myself. I think it is a great pity you should not be allowed to make Evelyn happy as I know you would and could."

"Thank you. You do me more honour than your husband. He thinks I am insolent and presumptuous."

"Ah, he is so dreadfully proud. His pride is so terrible!" said she, and through the twilight I saw the shudder which ran through her frame.

"I am in hopes I shall conquer it," I said, presently.

"No, you will not. There is a singular stubbornness under all his generosity and goodness. You may move a rock, but you will not change Winthrop Thorpe in this matter. He is so firm, true, and upright himself he has no mercy for the sins of weaker creatures."

"I do not consider it a sin for me to love Evelyn."

She hardly seemed to understand me. Her hands were clasped over her breast, her head drooping. I saw that she was not thinking of my case at all. A long silence followed. A servant came in to light the gas, but she ordered a small jet in the corridor to be kindled and the door left open, which left the little room in a dimness that was akin to twilight.

She kept a long silence and I did not disturb her. Suddenly she sprang to her feet and spoke, hoarsely:

"Oh, heavens! Oh, pitiful heavens!"

I saw that next instant what had alarmed her. There was a face pressed against the pane, and what light the room held was reflected upon it. A grim, ghastly, evil face. In another moment it vanished.

(To be continued.)

MIGRATION OF SWALLOWS.—Among the best known of our migrating birds is the swallow. Its disappearance formerly gave rise to so much discordancy of opinion that in the time of Linnaeus the prevalent belief was that all the species of those birds retired on the approach of winter to the bottoms of ponds, and there were even numerous attestations to that effect. Even Linnaeus himself imbibed the popular credulity on this subject, and such was his authority that it was a long time before naturalists would relinquish the preposterous idea. It is now clearly ascertained, however, that these birds regularly migrate; those few which are found dead, or half dormant, during the winter being either too feeble or hatched too late to follow their parents. Nor, as Montagu justly observes, can there be any reason why we should doubt their capability of performing these regular migrations when we allow it without hesitation to other and much more delicate birds. In fact the swallow, from its velocity alone,

is peculiarly calculated for such flights; and when we consider that it can and does suspend itself in the air for fourteen or sixteen hours together in search of food, it cannot fly over a less space than between 200 and 300 miles in that time. That its speed must be thus great is proved by the circumstance of swallows having been seen on the coast of Senegal on the 9th of October, which is eight or nine days after their departure from Europe.

LOUIS.

WHAT nobler and more romantic river than the Rhine. How pleasant the journey along its banks, as, wafted by its waves, we allow the imagination to capriciously to wander back over the scenes that have garlanded its name with most that is poetical and picturesque in history! How beautiful its verdant groves, its savage mountains, its vines falling in festoons over the prairies; and, finally, its ruins that crown the country and are reflected in the placid waters of the stream!

One must be dead to all the inspirations of hope, to all the impulses of youth, not to feel vividly the irresistible influence of its classic borders. The heart must be broken, the fountain of tears must be dry, the soul must be withered, not to experience unbounded enthusiasm at beholding the magnificent spectacle of the river Rhine. It is when surrounded by the images evoked or revived by such scenes that God speaks to us; it is in the face of His marvellous works of nature that we understand His language; it is there that we regret; it is there that we pray; it is there that we forgive!

Towards evening, on the second day of June, in the year 1670, a young woman was slowly ascending the path that led to the chateau of Frauberg; she was singing a sweet and melancholy German ballad, and carried a basket and wreaths of white roses, which she had picked in a little garden situated near the river's bank, which might be perceived, from a distance, to form a sort of island.

The briar hedges that environed it, and which appeared its only wall, were covered with a thousand white and roseate buds—lilacs just opening, and lily, orange, and myrtle blossoms in their characteristic and glittering green framework, embalmed the air and enchanted the eye.

From time to time the girl would turn and look backward, as if to bid a last adieu to her blooming enclosure; then she would gaily resume her walk and her song, happy in her heedlessness of seventeen summers, fugitive as the flowers she bore, and leaving, like them, only a vague and momentary but never-to-be-forgotten perfume.

When she reached the door of the house she paused and rang the bell, to which a heavy and shuffling footstep responded within.

The door opened, and a tall, slender old man clad in a sort of rusty green and red livery, welcomed the warbler with his tenderest of smiles.

Suddenly the sound of a bell reached their ear. They trembled, while the old man exclaimed:

"Who can come at such an hour?"

"Go quickly and open, father—it may be some lost traveller, or some messenger from his highness, for I can hear the tread of horses."

The old man entered the dilapidated mansion, conversed for a few moments behind the door with his visitors, then opened it, making at the same time the profoundest salutation, and introduced a young man, followed by attendants, and arrayed in the most elegant costume of the court of Louis XIV.

His pale and sad features wore that fatal expression which some profess to have remarked among those who are destined to die young. He presented himself with confidence and assurance, but wearing at the same time a sweet and benevolent expression.

"You consent, then, to offer me your hospitality, my good man?" said he.

"Willingly, your highness; it will be only too much honour for me."

"And where am I?"

"In the chateau of Frauberg, belonging to the Baron of Frauberg; and I am his steward."

"Ah, very good. And this pretty child is your daughter?" added he, perceiving Louise, who had just entered.

"Yes, your highness. Excuse her flowers; she is wreathing garlands for the approaching village fête."

The stranger could not withdraw his eyes from that heavenly countenance, blushing with modesty and apprehension; her flowers strewed and dangling about her, and on her head a crown of white roses, which gave her the appearance of a victim preparing for the sacrifice.

"Since you have been so willing to receive me," added the unknown, after a moment's silence, "I will ask your aid. A league hence I was wounded

and thrown from my horse, and have reached this place with great difficulty."

Louise dropped her garlands, whilst the old man ran towards the door, beckoning the traveller to follow him. The father and daughter conducted him to a very comfortable, though poorly furnished chamber, where they looked at his wounds, dressed them, and provided for his wants and requirements with the greatest care. Hospitality was never more attentive.

A few days elapsed. Louis—so the stranger called himself—only left his apartment that it might be put in order. There he passed his time in conversing with Louise, and listening as she sang her native airs and narrated the legends of her native land, but, above all, in admiring her as he watched the crown of snow-white roses that surmounted her brow.

She wore it every day, he had besought it at earnest. Poor Louise! The poison was gradually entering her heart; she was accustoming herself to those interviews of love that occupy the memory of an entire life—that can never be forgotten. She had become passionately attached, without realizing the change, to a stranger, who must soon leave her presence, carrying away with him the happiness and the repose of her existence, heretofore so calm. She loved with all her soul—poor Louise!

Seated at her toilet in a magnificent salon at Versailles, the Marchioness de Montespan was listening to the flatteries of the swarm of courtiers always eager to do her homage.

They were strolling about her apartments conversing among themselves, now and then addressing a few gallantries to the divinity of the day, and receiving the odd and sharp retorts which that distinguished woman spared no one—not even a friend. It was a reception-night at court, and Madame de Montespan had appeared with her hair decorated with pearls and adorned with a crown of white roses.

The Duke de Longueville was announced. He had come to take leave of the goddess of the king before leaving for the army. He wore a calm, cold smile as he threaded his way amid the giddy courtiers, who laughed at everything and found no time for reflection or retrospect.

They made way for him as he advanced towards the marchioness and took a seat at her side. The beautiful Montespan bestowed upon him one of those looks which had melted the great Louis, and asked if his outfit was ready, and if he would soon be on his way, adding a few questions suggested by politeness and interest, which she could not deny the nephew of the prince. The responses of the young duke were very measured.

Everyone was speculating on the departure of the king and his followers. No one, excepting perhaps the favourite, knew the plan of the campaign. Some talked of the Jassel, others of the Rhine, and others again of the siege of Maestricht.

"Where are we going?" they all inquired. "Does your highness know?"

"Nay," responded the young prince. "My uncle shrewdly keeps his own counsels."

"But, sir," added Madame de Montespan, "you know the country. Did you not visit it two years since, during that journey from which you returned so sad and suffering?"

The prince did not answer; his eyes were fastened on the crown of roses. A thousand memories were reawakened in his imagination, and everything then surrounding him was utterly lost to his regard. He saw again a little chamber in an old stone mansion; he saw again the features of an angel wreathing these same white flowers; he heard her evening carols full of harmony and charm; he listened to those sweet words that came from the heart and absorbed a soul with that atmosphere of love and innocence which he had breathed with so much pleasure. Anon, he contemplated those same angel-features bedewed with tears, and, looking up, with locks disordered, from his knees, at which they pleaded desparingly:

"Louise, you are leaving me. When shall I see you again?"

His lips had responded "Soon!" his conscience had said, "Never!" And from that day his soul had been filled with remorse. He had reproached himself for the fate of that young flower, blasted and withered by his smile. He had regretted his weakness without daring to learn the result. At this moment, in the midst of that reckless and brilliant court, these reminiscences, somewhat effaced by time, had crowded again upon his vision. Nor could he chase them away; that heart-reading voice still seemed to be murmuring in his ear:

"Louise, you are leaving me. When shall I see you again?"

Madame de Montespan smiled at his reverie.

"You are very serious, very distracted, duke," she observed. "You do not hear. You are apparently engrossed with your future, with your hopes."

"Nay, madame—with a reminiscence."

That same day, at the same hour, in an old manor, on the banks of the Rhine, a young woman was also seated at her dressing-table; but no one came to adorn her hair or compliment her for her beauty. In lieu of a gilded salon, her apartment was a little arched chamber; instead of golden chandeliers, she had but a modest lamp, whose dim rays paled before the light of the moon. On her toilet reposèd also a pearl necklace and a wreath of flowers; but the first was soiled, and the garland had faded. The poor girl was slowly disrobing herself. The tears rolled down her cheeks, while she pronounced in a low voice a few unintelligible phrases, interrupted by sobs, as her eyes, wandering over her modest retreat, involuntarily reverted to the crown she had essayed to place on her forehead.

"They do not become me," murmured she, "for I am no longer pretty. He left me; I have not heard from him for nearly two years. Like these flowers, my heart is withered."

As she said this she snatched them up and cast them far from her, but her eyes were still fixed upon them.

That ornament, formerly so fresh, now so discoloured, was the emblem of her life.

"Oh! my heaven!" cried she, throwing herself on her knees. "This is all that remains then of my love so intense, and my happiness so brief! A few pearls are tarnished, and a few roses have faded, while his heart has, perhaps, forgotten me, and in mine dwells an ineffaceable reminiscence!"

On the 2nd of June, 1672, the river we beheld so calm at the opening of this sketch became the witness of a battle. The Prince de Condé, at the head of his triumphant army, had crossed the stream, by swimming.

In a convent of the Sisters of Mercy, situated on the banks of the Rhine, near the scene of battle, they were already preparing the infirmaries for the wounded; the pious sisters were imploring heaven to save the souls and themselves striving to help the wounded.

The abbess ordered several novices to accompany her, and hold themselves in readiness to repair to the battle-field, to give aid to the unfortunate. While others more experienced were selecting the necessary remedies they went forth from the cloister, with veils lowered and their hearts filled with charitable emotions, to seek the poor creatures that required their care.

The sun was gilding with his expiring rays the turrets of Frauberg and the spires of the monastery; the little garden no longer embalmed the air; the uncultivated lands produced now only briars; it was, with this modification, almost a repetition of the scene of the second year preceding. The noise and excitement of battle had given place to the quiet of evening.

When the bark containing the sisters neared the opposite shore a man covered with blood and dust, who had been standing near a younger man beside a figure covered with a cloak, advanced to meet them.

"Sisters," he said, "will you receive into your convent the Prince de Condé and the Duke de Bourbon, with the body of the Duke de Longueville, this morning killed while combating at our side?"

The abbess bowed before the warrior and assented to his request. By her order the noble and sad charge was subsequently deposited in the vessel.

"Sister Louise," added she, turning to one of the novices, "conduct their highnesses to the chapel, and pray for the young prince whom heaven has recalled to its presence."

The Prince de Condé seated himself with his companion and a few officers at one end of the boat. The corpse was deposited at the other extremity, and the young sister kneeled beside it; they were alone. At irresistible desire seized her to look upon the face of the prince thus stricken down in the flower of his years and hopes. She raised the cloak a little and recognized the features.

"My heaven!" cried she, falling forward, almost inanimate. "It is he!"

Louise, now "Sister" Louise, thus learned, at the same time, the name and destiny of the man whom she had loved so passionately, and whose desertion had forced her into solitude. She could not shed a tear. Deep and earnest grief does not weep; it prays.

And the waters of the stream glided beautifully and limpid as is the hour of love and joy; the imperial banner still floated above the fortress of R——, and nothing had changed in this delightful country—nothing but the life of a young girl, withered like the flowers she had planted with her own hands.

S. R. S.



[TOM MAXWELL JILTED.]

FANNY SUMMERS.

"I HATE HER!" cried Tom Maxwell. "I hate her! And I hope she will die a miserable, disappointed old maid!"

Striding up and down the room, his face flaming, his eyes flashing, his very coat-tail quivering with rage, a Bengal tiger robbed of her young could not have looked much more ferocious object. And yet ferocity was not natural to Mr. Tom Maxwell — handsome Tom, whose years were only two-and-twenty, and who was as hot-headed and impetuous as it is in the nature of two-and-twenty to be, but by no means innately savage. But he had just been jilted, jilted in cold blood; so up and down he strode, grinding his teeth vindictively, and fulminating anathemas maranathas against his fair deceiver.

"The miserable, heartless jilt! The deceitful, shameless coquette!" burst out Tom, furiously. "She gave me every encouragement that a woman could give, until she drew me on by her abominable wiles to make a simpleton of myself; and then she turns round, smiles and weeps, and is 'very sorry,'" mimicking the feminine intonation, "'never dreamed of such a thing, and will be very happy to be my friend; but for anything farther—oh! dear, Mr. Maxwell, pray don't think of it!' Confound her and the whole treacherous sex to which she belongs! But I have not done with her yet! I'll have revenge as sure as my name is Tom Maxwell!"

"How?" asked a lazy voice from the sofa. "She's a woman, you know. Being a woman, you can't very well call her out and shoot her, or horsewhip her. A fellow may feel like that—I often have myself after being jilted; but still it can't be done. It's an absurd law, I allow, this polite exemption of womankind from condign and just punishment; but

it is too late in the day for two young men like you and I to go tilt against popular prejudices."

It was a long speech for Mr. Paul Warden, who was far too indolent generally to get beyond monosyllables. He lay stretched at full length on the sofa, languidly smoking the brownest of meerschaums, and dreamily watching the smoke curl and wreath around his head. A handsome fellow, very handsome — five years Tom's senior, and remarkably clever in his profession, the law, when not too lazy to exercise it.

Mr. Tom Maxwell paused in his excited striding to look in astonishment at the speaker.

"You jilted!" he said. "You! You, Paul Warden, the irresistible!"

"Even so, *mon ami*. Like measles, mumps, and tooth-cutting, it's something one has to go through, willy nilly. I have been jilted and heartbroken some half-dozen times, more or less, and here I am to-night not a halfpenny the worse for it. So go it, Tom, my boy! The more you rant and rave now the sooner the pain will be over. It is nothing when you are used to it. By the way," turning his indolent eyes slowly, "is she pretty, Tom?"

"Of course," said Tom, indignantly. "What do you think I am? Pretty! She's beautiful, glowing, fascinating! Oh, Warden! it drives me mad to think of it!"

"She is all my fancy painted her—she is lovely—she is divine!" quoted Mr. Warden; "but her heart, it is another's, and *à never*—What's her name, Tom?"

"Fanny Summers. If you had been in this place four-and-twenty hours you would have no need to ask. Half the men in town are mad about her."

"Fanny! Ah! a very bad omen. Never knew a Fanny yet who was not a natural born flirt! What is the style—dark or fair, belle blonde, or *jolie* brunette?"

"Brunette; dark, bright, and sparkling—saucy, piquant, irresistible! Oh!" cried Tom, with a dismal groan, sinking into a chair, "it is too bad—too bad to be treated so!"

"So it is, my poor Tom! She deserves the bastinado, the wicked witch! The bastinado not being practicable, let us think of something else. She deserves punishment, and she shall have it; paid back in her own coin, and with interest, too. Eh? Well?" For Tom had started up in his chair violently excited and red in the face.

"'Tae very thing!" cried Tom, with a sort of yell. "I have it; she shall be paid in her own coin, and I will have most glorious revenge, if you will only help me, Paul!"

"To my last breath, Tom! Hand me the matchbox, my pipe's gone out. Now, what is it?"

"Paul, they call you irresistible—the women do."

"Do they? Very polite of them. Well?"

"Well, being irresistible, why can't you make love to Fanny Summers, talk her into a desperate attachment to you, and then treat her as she has treated me—jilt her?"

Paul Warden opened his large, dreamy eyes to their widest, and fixed them on his excited young friend.

"Do you mean it, Tom?"

"Never meant anything more seriously in my life, Paul."

"But supposing I could do it; supposing I am the irresistible conqueror you gallantly make me out; supposing I could talk the charming Fanny into that deplorable attachment—it seems mean, does it not?"

"Mean!" exclaimed poor Tom, smarting under a sense of his own recent wrong; "and what do you call her conduct to me? It is a poor rule that won't work both ways. Let her have it herself, hot and strong, and see how she likes it—she has earned it richly. You can do it, I know, Paul; you have a way with you among women. I don't understand it myself, but I see it is successful. You can do it, and you are no friend of mine, Paul Warden, if you don't."

"Do it! My dear fellow, what wouldn't I do to oblige you? Break fifty hearts, if you asked me. Here is my hand—it's a go!"

"And you will flirt with her, and jilt her?"

"Yes. Let the campaign begin at once; let me see my fair future victim to-night."

"But you will be careful, Paul," said Tom, cooling down as his friend heated up. "She is very pretty, uncommonly pretty; you have no idea how pretty, and she may turn the tables and subjugate you, instead of you subjugating her."

"The old story of the minister who went to Rome to convert the Pope, and returned a red-hot Catholic. Not any thanks! My heart is iron-clad; has stood too many sieges to yield to any flirting brunette. Forewarned is forearmed. Come on, old fellow," rising from his sofa, "never say die."

"How goes the night?" said Tom, looking on; "it's rainy. Do you mind?"

"Shouldn't mind if it rained pitchforks in so good a use. Get your overcoat and come. I think those old—what do you call 'em, Crusaders? —must have felt as I do now, when they marched to take Jerusalem. Where are we to find *la belle Fanny*?"

"At her sister's, Mrs. Walters's; she's only here on a visit; but during her five weeks' stay she has turned five dozen heads, and refused five dozen hands, my own the last," said Tom, with a groan.

"Never mind, Tom; there is balm in Gilead yet. Revenge is sweet, you know, and you shall taste it before the moon wanes. Now then, Miss Fanny, the conquering hero comes!"

The two young men sallied forth into the rainy, lamp-lit streets. A passing omnibus took them to the home of the coquettish Fanny, and Tom rang the bell with vindictive emphasis.

"Won't she rather wonder to see you, after refusing you?" inquired Mr. Warden, whilst they waited.

"What do I care!" responded Mr. Maxwell, moodily; "her opinion is of no consequence to me now."

Mrs. Walters, a handsome, agreeable-looking young matron, welcomed Tom with a cordial shake of the hand, and acknowledged Mr. Warden's bow by the brightest of smiles, as they were ushered into the family parlour.

"We are quite alone, this rainy night, my sister and I," she said. "Mr. Walters is out of town for a day or two. Fanny, my dear, Mr. Warden; my sister, Miss Summers, Mr. Warden."

It was a pretty, cozy room, "curtained, close, and warm;" and directly under the gaslight, reading a lady's magazine, sat one of the prettiest girls it had ever been Mr. Warden's good fortune to see, and who welcomed him with a brilliant smile.

"Black eyes, jetty ringlets, rosy cheeks, alabaster brow," thought Mr. Warden, taking stock; "the smile of an angel, and dressed to perfection. Poor Tom! he's to be pitied. Really, I have not come across anything so much to my taste for a long time."

Down sat Mr. Paul Warden beside the adorable Fanny, plunging into conversation at once with an ease and fluency that completely took away Tom's breath. That despondent woso on the sofa, beside Mrs. Walters, pulled wildly at the ears of her black and tan terrier, and answered at random all the pleasant things she said to him. He was listening, poor fellow, to that brilliant flow of small talk from the moustached lips of his dashing friend, and wishing the gods had gifted him with a similar "gift of the gab," and feeling miserably jealous already. He had prepared the rack for himself with his eyes wide open; but that made the torture none the less when the machinery got in motion.

Pretty Fanny snubbed him incontinently, and was just as bewitching as she knew how to be his friend. It was a clear case of diamond cut diamond—two flirts pitted against each other; and an outsider would have been considerably puzzled on which to bet, both being so evenly matched.

Tom listened and sulked; yes, sulked. What a lot of things they found to talk about, when he need to be tongue-tied. The wild launch into literature, novels, authors, poets; then the weather; then Mr. Warden was travelling and relating his "hair-breadth escapes by flood and field," whilst bright-eyed Fanny listened in breathless interest. Then the open piano caught the irresistible Fanny's eyes, and in a twinkling there was Fanny seated at it, her white fingers flying over the polished keys, and he bending over her with an entranced face. Then he was singing a delightful love song in a melodious tenor voice, that might have captivated any heart that ever beat inside of lace and muslin; and then Fanny was singing a sort of response, it seemed to the franticly jealous Tom; and then it was eleven o'clock, and time to go home.

Out in the open air, with the rainy night wind blowing bleakly, Tom lifted his hat to let the cold blast cool his hot face. He was sulky still, and silent—very silent; but Mr. Warden didn't seem to mind it.

"So," he said, lighting a cigar, "the campaign has begun, the first blow has been struck, the enemy's ramparts undermined. Upon my word, Tom, the little girl is uncommonly pretty!"

"I told you so," said Tom, with a sort of growl.

"And remarkably agreeable. I don't think I ever spent a pleasanter *à-la-fête* evening."

"So I should judge. She had eyes, ears, and tongue for no one but you."

"My dear fellow, it's not possible that you're jealous? Isn't that what you wished? Besides, there is no reason, really; she is a professional flirt, and understands her business; you and I know how much value to put on all that sweetness. Have a cigar, my dear boy, and keep up your heart; we'll fix the flirting Fanny yet!"

This was all very true; but, somehow, it wasn't consoling. She was nothing to him, of course—and he hated her as much as ever; but, somehow, his thirst for vengeance had considerably cooled down. The cure was worse than the disease. It was madening to a young man in his frame of mind to see those brilliant smiles, those entrancing glances, all those pretty, coquettish, womanly wiles that had deluded him showered upon another, even for that other's delusion. Tom wished he had never thought of revenge, at least with Paul Warden for his handsome agent.

"Are you going there again?" he asked, moodily.

"Of course," replied Mr. Warden. "What a question, from you of all people. Didn't you hear the little darling telling me to call again? She overlooked you completely, by the by. I'm going again, and again, and yet again, until my friend is avenged."

"Ah!" said Tom, sulkily, "but I don't know that I care so much for vengeance as I did at first. Second thoughts are best; and it struck me, whilst I watched you both to-night, that it was mean and cowardly to plot against a woman like this. You thought so yourself at first, you know."

"Did I? I forgot. Well, I think differently now, my dear Tom; and, as you remark, second thoughts are best. My honour is at stake; so put your conscientious scruples in your pocket, for I will conquer the fascinating Fanny, or perish in the attempt. Here we are; won't you come in? No? Well, then good night. By the way, I shall be at the enemy's quarters to-morrow evening; if you wish to see how ably I fight your battles show yourself before nine. By-by!"

Mr. Maxwell's answer was a deep growl as he plodded on his way; and Mr. Paul Warden, running up to his room, laughed lightly to himself.

"Poor Tom! Poor, dear boy! Jealousy is a green-eyed monster, and he's a prey to it—the worst kind. Really, Paul, these little black eyes are the most bewitching ones you have met in your travels lately; and if you wanted a wife, which you don't, you know, you couldn't do better than go in and win. As it is—Ah! it's a pity for the little girl's sake you can't marry."

With which reflection Mr. Warden went to bed.

Next evening, at half-past eight, Mr. Tom Maxwell made his appearance at Mrs. Walters, only to find his friend there enthroned before him, and basking in the sunshine of the lovely Fanny's smile. How long he had been there Tom couldn't guess; but he and Fanny and Mrs. Walters were arranging to go to the theatre the following night. There was a bunch of roses, pink and white, his gift, in Fanny's hand, and into which she plunged her pretty little nose every five seconds with a delightful sniff. It was adding insult to injury, the manifest delight that *aggravating* girl felt in his friend's society; Tom ground his teeth inwardly, and had seen Mr. Paul Warden guillotined, there and then, with all the pleasure in life.

That evening, and many other evenings which succeeded, was but a repetition of the first. A weary flow of delightful small talk, music, singing, and reading aloud. Yes, Mr. Paul Warden read aloud, as if to gloat that unhappy Tom to open madam, in the most musical of masculine voices, out of little blue-and-gold books, Tennyson, Longfellow, and Owen Meredith; and Fanny would sit in breathless earnestness, her colour coming and going, her breath fluttering, her eyes full of tears frequently, fixed on Paul's classic profile. Tom didn't burst out openly—he made no scene, he only sat and frowned in malignant silence—and that is saying sufficient for his power of self-control.

Two months passed away; hot weather was coming, and Fanny began to talk of the heat and dust of the town; of being home-sick, for the sight of green fields, cows, strawberry-beds, and new-laid eggs, and pa and ma.

It had been a very delightful two months, no doubt; and she had enjoyed Mr. Warden's society very much, driving and walking with him, she had let him take her to the theatre, and the opera, had played for him, sang for him, danced with him, and accepted his bouquets, new music, and blue-and-gold books; but for all that it was evident she could leave him and go home, and still exist.

"It's all very nice," Miss Summers had said, tossing back her black ringlets; "and I have enjoyed this spring very much, but still I'm glad to get home again. One grows tired of balls, parties, and the theatre, you know, after awhile. Mr. Warden, and I'm only a little country girl, and I shall be just as glad as ever for a romp over the meadows, and a breezy gallop across the hills once more. If you or Mr. Maxwell," glancing at that gloomy youth sideways out of her curls, "care much for racing, and come our way during the summer, I'll try and treat you as well as you have treated me."

"But you haven't treated us well, Miss Fanny," Mr. Warden said, looking unspeakable things. "You take our hearts by storm, and then break them ruthlessly by leaving us. What sort of treatment do you call that?"

Miss Summers only laughed, looked archly, and danced away, leaving her two admirers standing together in the cold.

"Well, Tom," Mr. Warden said, "and so the game's up, the play played out, the curtain ready to fall. The star actress departs to-morrow, and now what do you think of the performance?"

"Not much," responded Tom, moodily. "I can't see that you have kept your promise. You've made love to her, I allow, as if you meant it, in fact; but I don't see where the jilting occurs. I can't see where my revenge."

"Don't you?" said Paul, thoughtfully, lighting his cigar. "Well, now I come to think of it, I don't either. To tell you the truth, I haven't had a chance to jilt her. I may be irresistible, and I have no doubt I am, since you say so; but, somehow, the charm don't seem to work with our little favourite. Here I have been for the last two months as captivating as I know how to be; and yet that girl is ready to be off to-morrow to the country, without so much as a crack in the heart that should be broken in smithereens! But still," he said, with a sudden change of voice, and slapping him lightly on the shoulder, "dear old boy, I don't despair of giving you your revenge yet!"

Tom lifted his gloomy eyes in sullen inquiry.

"Never mind now," said Mr. Paul Warden. "Give me a few weeks longer. Lazy as I am, I have never failed yet in anything I seriously undertook, and, upon my word, I'm more serious about this

matter than you may believe. Trust to your friend, and wait."

That was all Mr. Warden would deign to say.

Tom, not being able to do otherwise, took him at his word, dragged out existence, and waited for his cherished revenge.

Miss Summers left town next day; and Tom, poor miserable fellow, felt as if the sun had ceased to shine, and the scheme of the universe become a wretched failure, when he caught the last glimmer of the lustrous black eye, the last flutter of the pretty black curls.

But his Damon was by his side to tap him on the back and cheer him up.

"Courage, old fellow," cried Mr. Warden; "all's not lost that's in danger. Turn and turn about; your turn next!"

But, somehow, Tom didn't care for revenge any more.

He loved that wicked, jilting little Fanny as much as ever; and the heartache only grew worse day after day, but he ceased to desire vengeance. He settled down into a kind of gentle melancholy, lost his appetite, his relish for amusements, and took to writing despondent poetry for the *weekly journals*.

In this state Mr. Warden left him, and suddenly disappeared from town. Tom didn't know where he had gone, and his landlady didn't know; and stranger still, his bootmaker and tailor, to whom he was considerably in arrears, didn't know either. But they were soon enlightened.

Five weeks after his mysterious disappearance a letter and a newspaper, came in his familiar hand, to Tom whilst he sat at breakfast.

He opened the letter first and read:

"IN THE COUNTRY.

"DEAR OLD BOY,—I have kept my word—you are avenged gloriously. Fanny will never jilt you nor anyone else again!"

At this passage Mr. Tom Maxwell laid it down, the cold perspiration breaking out on his face.

Had Paul Warden murdered—or, worse, had he married her? With a desperate clutch he seized the paper, tore it open, looked at the list of marriages, and saw his worst fears realized. There it was, in print, the atrocious revelation of his bosom friend's perfidy:

"MARRIED, on the fifth inst., at the residence of the bride's father, Paul Warden, Esq., of C——, to Miss Fanny Summers, of this town."

There it was. Tom didn't faint; he swallowed a scalding cup of coffee at a gulp, revived, seized the letter, and finished it.

"You see, old fellow, paradoxical as it sounds, although I was the conqueror, I was also the conquered. Fanny had fallen in love with me, as you foresaw, but I had fallen in love with her also, which you didn't foresee! I might have jilted her, of course, but that would have been cutting off my own nose to spite my friend's face; and so I didn't. I did the next best thing for you though—I married her; and I may mention, in parenthesis, that I am the happiest of mankind. Adieu, my boy. We'll come to town next week, when Fan and I will be delighted to see you. With best regards from my dear little wife, I am, old fellow, your devoted friend

"PAUL WARDEN."

Mr. and Mrs. Warden did come to town next week, but Mr. Maxwell didn't call. In short, he hasn't called since and doesn't intend to do so, and has given his friend Paul the "cut direct."

And that is how Mr. Paul Warden got a wife, and Mr. Tom Maxwell obtained his Revenge!

M. C.

A PETRIFIED FOREST.—In the vicinity of Cairo, in a rocky and desolate region, where the mind can scarcely conceive it possible that a forest could ever have existed, countless trees are scattered about in every direction, apparently overthrown by a mighty tempest. The hills and valleys are covered with them; some of them are sixty or seventy feet in length, and upwards of three feet in diameter. There they lie, with their roots and branches perfect, and the very clefts produced by age or heat are visible. But on a closer inspection they will be found to have been changed into a hard stone, which, when cut, shows a fine variety of colour, and is susceptible of a high polish. Nothing is known of the origin of these wonderful trees. The period during which they flourished, and the very place where they grew, are matters wrapped in impenetrable mystery.

A WEST INDIA HURRICANE.—An eye-witness of the havoc caused by the late hurricane at St. Thomas says: "The wharfs which used to line the shore were gone, and every street blocked up with broken rafters, zinc roofs, bricks, boughs of cocoanut palms, household furniture, and débris of every con-

ceivable kind. Houses even were to be seen standing erect which had been lifted from their foundations many yards distant and dropped down into some of the lanes running seaward out of the main street. A dining-room, forming the upper storey of a wing of the house belonging to Mr. J. B. Cameron, Superintendent of the Royal Mail Packet Company at St. Thomas, had been in a similar manner whisked through the air and carried into a neighbouring garden; singular to say, on effecting an entrance, the lamps and decanters in the room were found to be unbroken. In one lane were to be seen, among tons of broken wood, an anchor, several cartwheels, a pianoforte, and slabs of marble, which, when the storm was at its height, had been seen whirling round in the air like sheets of paper. Windows, though protected by bolts and hurricane bars, stout pieces of wood several inches square, had been dashed in, and not a wall but showed marks of the hail of stones and bricks which had battered it. A bombarded town could never have presented a worse picture of ruin and desolation."

THE DUCHESS VISCONTI.

CHAPTER IV.

In one of the most beautifully situated apartments of the ducal palace stood a harpsichord, before which sat a lady, striking the keys with her matchless fingers, and anon listening to words of advice and instruction from a person who stood by her side.

Paulina was the lady's name—a ward of the duke, and niece of the duchess. Her father was Charles, Marquis of Mantua, who, when dying of wounds received in battle with the Guelphs, had left his sweet child in care of his sister's husband. She had seen nineteen years of life, and if we might judge by the bloom upon her face they had been happy years—happy from purity and truth, the sorrows having been but as passing clouds, which, though obscuring for a time the brighter sunshine of life, had no power to reduce the light that burst forth warm and enduring from a nature that knew no guile.

Bright and beautiful in spirit, her face was as a mirror wherein the twin-angels of Virtue and Love had set their radiant seal. Her long hair, trembling in the sunlight like coils of burnished gold, fell unconfined over her faultless shoulders; and as the notes of the song which she was practising melted into a pathetic strain her face was upturned, and at that moment the man who stood by her side felt his heart hush its beatings as though he had suddenly been transported to the realm of angelic life and presence.

It was Matteo Beilani who thus watched the features of his pupil, and it would be difficult to tell which of the two presented the fairest picture of life—he, for one in whom were centred all those attributes that make up the true and noble man, or she, for one upon whom had been bestowed all those graces of soul and body that mark the highest type of loving, virtuous womanhood.

By and by the lesson was completed, and as had become a habit with them of late, teacher and pupil sat down for a season of social conversation. At first Matteo had given his lessons and departed; but, even on his first visit, Paulina had, from an instinct that seldom fails a true woman, discovered that he was a man to be trusted; and as she became better acquainted with him the ice of formal conventionalism was broken, and at length it came to pass that he remained to entertain her with music of his own arrangement; and finally they fell into conversation upon topics of general interest.

"How now, signor?" demanded Paulina, half playfully and half seriously. "You do not offer to play for me to-day?"

Matteo started, and for a moment a shadow of confusion was perceptible upon his handsome face. But he overcame the passing emotion, and replied:

"I have nothing new to play, signora; and you must surely have become tired of those trifling canzonettas which I have sung so often."

"Oh, signor, you do me injustice when you say that. You know that I could never be weary of listening to those sweet pieces. No, no—it is not that. You are more thoughtful than usual. Something troubles you. If you were a Guelph I should be almost tempted to think that the present insecure position of the Torriani troubled you. But," pursued the lady, with a smile, "how do I know that you are not a Guelph at heart?"

"Signora," spoke the teacher, with a seriousness that caused her to start, "that were to say that you knew not if I had a heart."

"How so, pray?"

"What heart, beating with honour and truth, could bear the sweet smiles and cheer of the Lady Paulina and at the same time hold sentiments opposed to the interests of her house?"

"Indeed, signor, you are a true courtier."

"Oh, tell me you think me a true man, and I will bless you for the compliment."

"By my life, I think you more than that. You are not only a true man, but—"

"But what, signora?"

"Pardon me, signor. My tongue was well nigh running away with my sense."

She blushed, and for the moment was confused; and Matteo, observing the rich flush upon her cheeks, and marking the melting light in her eyes, felt a thrill at his heart such as he had never felt before. But he was stronger than she, and more quickly called up his power of self-control; and when he saw that she was still confused he changed the subject, but not until a new and ecstatic emotion had found place in his bosom.

Why had that flush suffused the maiden's face?—why had she trembled when her tongue thus found speech in warm and ardent praise of himself? It was a wild and shapeless impulse of feeling, but it had its rise deep down in his soul, and its impress was not to be easily obliterated. He dared not analyze it then. Like the man who dreams in consciousness that it is only a dream, and tries to sleep on, that the beatific vision may not melt into thin air, so Matteo Beilani sought to shut in the thrilling ecstasy from the sweeping force of outer circumstances, lest it should pass from him. He was a man of sound sense, and wild chimeras of the brain had no power to lead him into the pursuit of impossibilities. Had the Lady Paulina maintained towards him a calm and dignified reserve, saying to him, "This is my place—that is yours," he might have visited her daily for a twelvemonth, and no thought of even seeking at her shrine one sweet smile would have entered his mind; but when she came to approach him as a friend—when she sought his social converse—when she looked up into his face and plainly showed that she liked to see him smile—when she seemed to say unto him, "I am glad thou art here," then who shall wonder that the warm-hearted, impulsive youth allowed his heart to yearn for the blessed smile and enchanting words of the lovely maiden?

And how was it with the Lady Paulina? It may not be our province to speculate upon what might have been the probable or possible cause of her more than sisterly confidence and impulsive warmth of admiration while in the youthful artizan's presence; but, if we understand exactly how she was situated, we shall be much better able to judge of her sentiments towards her teacher.

So now we can see something of the feeling which led Matteo to change the subject of conversation when he observed that Paulina's warm impulsiveness had led her to a point of confusion.

"Dear lady," he said, "what is this I hear about the duke's having found a long-lost son? It has been told me that such is the case."

"It is true, signor," replied the maiden; and, as she spoke, something like a cloud flitted across her face. "My uncle has truly found a son who had been lost to him many years. It seems that, in his youth, or rather in the earlier days of his manhood, he took to himself a wife from the lower walks of life, and from motives of state policy the circumstance was kept a secret. A child was born to them, and upon the death of the mother—which happened, I believe, shortly after the birth of the child—the little one was taken away to Valenza. But I do not understand it fully. I only know that the child has been found, and that the duke is very happy and hopeful. He thinks now there may be chance for the rise of our house again to power in Milan."

"Heaven grant it may be so!" ejaculated Matteo, fervently. "The illness of our noble duke and the fear that he might never again be able to lead the Ghibelline against the usurping Guelph has filled me with sorrow. All we need is a proper representative of our principles. The present course of Francisco Della Torre must, in the end, lead him to ruin and disgrace. He has made an enemy of the emperor, and that alone insures his final fall. If Visconti has found a son capable of bearing arms, he will be very sure, ere long, to be elevated to the Podesta's throne. But how is it, señora; what sort of a man is this son?"

"I cannot tell you, signor?"

"Have you not seen him?"

"Yes, I have seen him, but I have not seen sufficient to enable me to judge of his character."

"Ah, lady, I fear me that the youth is not fortunate."

"How so, signor?"

"If you, with your keenness of perception, have failed to like him, he surely must lack some good quality."

The Lady Paulina smiled, and shook her head; but, after a short pause, she said:

"He may be all that could be desired for the office

he is likely to be called upon to fill, and yet not possess those qualities which would please a light-hearted girl."

Was Matteo pained to learn that the prospective heir of the dukedom was such as could not readily win the confidence and esteem of the Lady Paulina? If he were he did not show it; but, on the contrary, he seemed rather pleased than otherwise. In truth, the young artizan was glad enough that the duke had found an heir for his coronet; and he was also glad that the said heir was not likely to win the love of the duke's fair ward. He arose to his feet, and had begun to gather up the sheets of written music that lay scattered around upon the harpsichord, the Lady Paulina asked him to sing one song for her before he went away.

"Certainly," he quickly replied.

And, as he moved towards the seat which she had vacated, there was a solemn look upon his face, as though his thoughts would spend themselves in sombre music; but presently a bright smile chased the cloud away, and he lightly added:

"Shall it be a sportive lay?"

"Yes, signor; I would rather laugh than cry."

"Then let it be one of Anacreon's bright fancies." He sat down, and, having run off a brilliant prelude upon the harpsichord, and continuing a sparkling accompaniment, he sang as follows:

"Cupid once, upon a bed
Of roses, laid his weary head;
Luckless urchin, not to see,
Within the leaves, a slumbering bee;
The bee awaked; with anger wild,
The bee awaked, and stung the child.
Loud and piteous are his cries;
To Venus quick he runs, he flies!
'Oh, mother, I am wounded through—
I die with pain—in sooth I do!
Stung by some little angry thing,
Some serpent on a tiny wing—
A bee it was—for once, I know,
I heard a rustic call it so.
Thus he spoke; and she, the while,
Heard him with a soothing smile:
Then said, 'My infant, if so much
Thou feel'st the little beld bee's touch,
How must the heart, ah, Cupid, be
The hapless heart that's stung by thee!'

The Lady Paulina smiled as she thanked the singer, and yet there was seriousness in the smile; but Matteo gave no sign that there had been more in the song than a mere playful turn of words; and in this pleasant mood he collected up his music and took his leave.

When the last faint echo of his receding footfall had died away the Lady Paulina turned her gaze from the door where she had last seen the manly form, and gazed upon the stool of the harpsichord.

"Oh!" she murmured, with a clear, calm light in her eye, and a quiet dignity of expression about her finely chiselled lips, which bespoke an honest sentiment at the heart, "if I could only know how he felt towards me! In many ways he has shown me that his soul is warmed with ardent passion; but I know not that I am its object. If he loves me he is both true and generous in his reserve, for he must know full well that common usages would permit no union between such as him and me, and that the patrician spirit of Lombardy would stand aghast at such a misalliance."

She was soliloquizing thus when the door of her apartment was opened, and the duchess entered. But this was no intrusion. Between the Lady Lavinia and her niece there had ever been a bond of close sympathy, and they loved one another truly and well. On the present occasion, however, the duchess was more sober than was her wont, and something like a sigh escaped her lips as she sat down.

"How now?" cried the Lady Paulina. "Is there something in the atmosphere to-day that makes people sober? My teacher came to me with a lengthened visage, and he would not have sung for me if I had not urged him. And now you come, and your salutation is a sigh. Mercy! is my face long too, dear lady?"

"Your face is now of just a proper length," replied the duchess, with a smile; "and I have come to make it shorter. I have good news for you, Paulina!"

"Good news, say you?"

"In truth, my child, good news. I am commissioned by the duke, your guardian, to acquaint you with that which must cause your heart to bound with joy."

"If such be the case, good aunt, I pray you keep not the intelligence from me; but let me know at once what it is that you are commissioned to tell me."

"Paulina," spoke the Lady Lavinia, a little soberly for one who had much pleasure to impart, "how should you like to be in my place?"

"In your place, dear lady? I do not comprehend."

"I mean—How would you like to be the Duchess Visconti?"

The maiden started, and the colour forsook her cheeks.

"Duchess Visconti!" she repeated, seeming almost afraid of the words. "What mean you? I am more in the dark than before."

"Can you not divine my meaning, Paulina?"

"I wish not to try. If you have such happy news, you would not wish me to steal from you the privilege of explanation. But, my dear aunt, your hesitancy leads me to suspect that your mission is not so pleasant, after all."

"And yet, my child," added the duchess, "I cannot say that my mission is at all unpleasant. But enough. I will speak to the point, and you shall be the judge. It is the wish of the duke that all possible support shall be given to his house, and as a union between yourself and his son would secure to the Visconti the whole influence of Mantua, he is very anxious that such a union should take place. That is my mission, Paulina."

The maiden looked straight into her aunt's face, neither growing paler, nor colouring deeper. The only sign of emotion was in the clutching of her fingers upon the folds of her robe. At length her lips opened, and in a tone of strange calmness she demanded:

"Will the duke insist upon this?"

"Indeed, my child, I cannot tell you. But you have not told me how the idea pleases you. You are already a woman, and it must have entered your thoughts that you might ere long be a wife. How would you like Giovanni Visconti for a husband?"

"Lady," spoke the ward in reply, "you have seen this new-found son of the duke, and you have had opportunity to mark the spirit he carries in his face. Tell me—and I pray you tell me truly—how would you like him for a husband?"

The duchess hesitated.

"Speak, dear aunt; and by all you hold dear of heart-treasure on earth I conjure you to speak sincerely."

"Indeed, Paulina, I have not looked upon the man with any such thought."

"Oh, Lavinia of Mantua, I know your heart, and I know how you would answer were you in my place. There that in the face of Giovanni which strikes me with fear and dread. I pray you say to the duke that I cannot be that man's wife."

"Paulina, do not send a hasty answer. Oh, I wish you would try and find it in your heart to make a different response. Stop, my child, and hear me through. Your own good sense must tell you that these are trying times, and your uncle must seize upon every support that presents itself. In your union with his son is brought to the support of our house the whole influence of Bozzolo and Ostiano, those two towns which have, ere now, swayed the destiny of Mantua. You know how the Ghibelline cause is situated. You are a powerful representative, and in case of any conflict your mandate could bring two thousand stout men into the field; and, what is more, a large revenue would result to our coffers, which else might find its way into those of the Guelphs."

"My dear aunt," urged the stricken girl, "if all this power be mine, why may I not give it into the duke's hands by the mere exercise of my will?"

"You forget, my child, that only the personal estates of your father are yours to dispose of by will. As Bozzolo and Ostiano, with their many thriving hamlets, are within the limits of the Podestariate, as a maiden under guardianship cannot hold political rule, and as your father had no power to turn those dependencies over to a prince of Milan, you cannot exercise authority but through a husband. When once you are married, then, if the Guelphs do not hold the territory by force of arms, the rule is yours. It is a question of vast moment, Paulina, and I beg that you will answer only upon due reflection."

The maiden reflected a while, and finally she said:

"To serve my uncle I might do much; but in this case I am called upon to give myself to the elevation of Giovanni. The duke does not dream of holding power himself."

"I am not sure of that, Paulina."

"At all events," the girl continued, with spirit, "this thing is asked at my hands entirely for the benefit of this son."

"And," suggested Lavinia, "you will remember that the son is the representative of the house of Visconti."

"I understand it."

"And you will consider ere you send an answer to the duke?"

Paulina arose to her feet and stood by the duchess's side.

"Dear lady, not now will I take my own heart from its place of quiet rest and put it beneath cruel feet to be trodden upon and crushed. That is my answer for the present. I must see more of Giovanni Visconti ere I answer farther."

The duchess gazed upon her niece, then she

looked upon the harpsichord, and upon the music, written in a clear, strong hand, that lay open upon the rack; then, with a vacant look, as though her thoughts had wandered off to some absent object, she slowly shook her head; but she pressed the subject no farther then.

CHAPTER V.

A MONTH had elapsed since Ludovico, the giovanstro, had become Giovanni Visconti, prospectively Duke of Milan, and during that time he had remained for the greater part in the palace, only venturing forth upon the canal in his father's gondola, or strolling out at night in disguise. He had longed for some of his old associates, but thus far he had resisted all temptation. And thus far, too, he had contrived to lead the duke to the belief that he had found a son in every way worthy of him. If he had any fault to find, it was in a lack of interest in national or political affairs. The truth was, the young man had no inclination to work, and he had not been long in discovering that if he would meet the duke's expectations, he must busy himself with affairs of State.

Now Giovanni (for so we must now call him) had looked upon the ducal chair as one in which the incumbent could sit with the greatest ease; and he supposed that men of high rank had only a careless round of pleasure to look forward to. The noblemen whom he had known in the past days had thus lived, and he had supposed the higher the rank the more prolific was it of pleasure.

He had thought of wine, women, horses, hawks, gondolas, cards, and dice; and he had fancied that while he issued his directions to others to do the work he could play. But when he came to sit with the duke, and see the budget opened, he found that he must, if he would be Duke of Milan, perform more labour than he had ever dreamed of. Not only must he work himself, but he must look to the work of hundreds of others. Still, there were some pleasures in prospect, and chief among them was the possession of the beautiful Paulina for his wife. The duke had told him that he must win her, for much of his future prosperity might depend upon the match. He had not troubled himself much in that direction, however, supposing that, when the time came, the ducal fiat would be issued, and the fair maiden would be his.

As for the duke, he was well satisfied with his son.

"It is all new to him now," he said to his wife; "but he seems to be anxious to learn, and ere long he will be fit to take the reins. The Torriani are in trouble; they have deeply offended the German Emperor, and I know that the Ghibellines will come into power very soon. And I tell you, Lavinia, that Paulina must accept him for a husband."

The duchess shook her head, and replied that she feared there would be trouble in accomplishing the object.

"And yet," persisted Visconti, "it must be done. I will see the girl myself, and present to her the necessities of the case."

And he saw her. She was sent for to his private apartment, and there he told her what he desired. He explained to her all that the duchess had explained, and sought to impress it upon her that in giving her hand to Giovanni she was but performing a solemn duty which she owed alike to herself and him.

Paulina did not burst into tears, nor did she betray any wild and ungovernable passion; but, calmly and dignified, she informed him that she could not at present give any promise to the desired end. She confessed that she did not like the young man, and she did not think she was called upon by any rightful law to sacrifice herself to political interests.

The duke spoke again, and recapitulated his reasons for desiring the union; and, when at length became warm and severe, the maiden stopped him.

"My lord," she said, "if you came to me and should say, 'Paulina, for my sake, wilt thou lay down thy life?' I should answer thee, yes. You have been most kind to me, and I love you truly; and for the love which I know you bear me, I would suffer much; but you do not ask me to aid you. You bid me give my hand to one who is to be strengthened in power thereby; but would it not be well first to assure yourself that he is worthy of power?"

The duke did not take this kindly. He had allowed himself to place full confidence in Giovanni, and he liked not that another should contradict him. So he chided Paulina for her speech and assured her that she was traducing a most worthy man. And when his ward replied to this he suffered his anger to rise, and swore that she should obey him.

"Paulina," he said, trembling with a rage of which

he might have been ashamed in the days when he was strong and well, "I am not to be thwarted in this. I have sought to bring you to my purpose by kind and lenient measures, but without effect; and now I declare unto you my fixed determination. I have the authority and the power, and I shall exercise both. If you do not understand the law of Milan touching that point, I will explain it to you. A female holding in dower territory to which is attached political power can be married by will of her legal guardian, providing there are no political interests in the land paramount to his. So you will understand, lady, that you are the affianced wife of Giovanni Visconti."

This was something which the Lady Paulina had not expected; and she knew that her guardian had spoken the truth; and, as she reflected that he never made a solemn promise which he did not intend to fulfil, her fortitude forsook her; and, with a convulsive sob, she sank down at the duke's feet, and clasped his knees with her outstretched hands.

"Oh, in mercy's name, spare me! spare me!"

But Lorenzo Visconti was not to be moved from his purpose. The prayer, as it militated against a cherished purpose, rather increased his anger than otherwise; and, ordering his niece to arise, he sent her from him.

Half an hour afterwards Giovanni entered the ducal presence; and, when he saw how pale and agitated his father was, he inquired the cause.

And the duke, still smarting under the refusal of one whom he had cherished and protected, and who owed to him the duty of a child, made known to his son the cause of his suffering.

At first the young man was deeply chagrined; but when the duke had assured him that the maiden's refusal would make no difference in the result, he became more calm and collected; when he had listened to his father's story, and had asked a few simple questions, he said:

"My dear father, there is more in this than you think for. There is a reason for her refusal of my hand which she has not told you of."

"How now, my son?" demanded the duke. "What new thing have you discovered?"

"My lord," replied Giovanni, with well-assumed honesty of tone and expression, "a man who would fit himself to wear the ducal coronet and hold sway over the interests of a great city, should cultivate his perception and judgment to the utmost extent."

"True, true, my son," he exclaimed, greatly delighted at what he thought an exhibition of sterling quality. "I am glad to hear you speak thus."

"Aye, my lord," pursued the youth, with a devoutness of expression which completely deceived the duke, "did I not seek to cultivate all those qualities which are necessary to the sustaining of the power which you in your unfortunate weakness of body may be forced to delegate to another, I should be unworthy the place which you have given me in your confidence and esteem. Heaven made me of your blood; but it must be my own endeavour which shall secure to me your love and faith."

"Bless you, my son! bless you!" cried Visconti, fairly shedding tears of gratitude. "You have my love, you have my esteem and confidence, and you shall have the hand of my ward. But this cause for her strange refusal—what think you it is?"

"My lord, I beg you to leave it in my hands a few days longer. It is my opinion that the lady has a lover of her own choice—a lover who has crept into her affections as a thief finds entrance into the house he would rob."

"In heaven's name, my son, can this be so?"

"Wait, sire, wait, and we shall see. If it be so, you and I will have the proof. Take no farther trouble, I implore you; but leave it in my hands, and await the result."

He could hardly believe this thing possible. There had been no patrician of any rank, save his son and himself, in his ward's company for a twelvemonth; and he could not give credit to the idea that the daughter of Charles of Mantua could stoop to give her heart to a plebeian. But he would wait; only he would have his son be sure. He would not cast such a suspicion upon his fair ward's spotless fame without good proof.

At the appointed time Matteo Bellani came again to give a lesson to the Lady Paulina. The maiden's eyes brightened as she met him, and the colour, which had been sadly fading from her cheeks, came back once more; but not, however, until the artisan had noticed the pallor which had rested upon her features. His own heart was heavier than usual, and though he sought to make the lesson as pleasant as others had been, he could not succeed.

"Dear lady," he said, as his pupil removed her fingers from the keys, "there must be something of gloom in the atmosphere to-day. If I believed as some believe I should think that evil spirits were

abroad in the air. My own heart is in a cloud, and I am sure that you are not feeling so gay and blithe as is your wont."

He stood close by her side—so close that his breath gently fanned her cheek, and as she met his gaze there was something in his expression that opened the fountain of her innermost feeling, and her eyes filled with tears while her lips trembled so that she could not speak.

"Lady!—dear lady! In heaven's name grant me your pardon! Alas! what have I said? Surely, I meant not thus to have moved you."

"It was not that, signor," returned the trembling girl, with her eyes bent upon the keys of the instrument before her. "My own feelings overcame me. I will play no more."

"Suffer me, signora."

And he extended his hand to conduct her to a seat upon the sofa.

She took it, and as she arose to her feet their eyes met again. There was something in that glance which neither could resist. Already were they swayed by emotions which had crept into their hearts unawares—already were they drawn towards each other by thoughts which had come unbidden, and almost unnoticed till now—already had each felt the impress of the other's love—love unspoken, and perhaps unknown, but all powerful, nevertheless—and thus in a moment when reason had been entirely overcome by a surge of feeling which pervaded every avenue of thought, their eyes met, and the silent language of that mutual glance was as plain and emphatic as though it had been spoken in well-chosen words.

The maiden hesitated, as though she knew not whether to venture to reach the proffered seat, or to sink back again upon the stool from which she had arisen; and while she hesitated the wild whirl of emotion completely overpowered her, she reclined her head upon her tutor's bosom, suffered the stout arms to enfold her, and draw her more closely to the rest she had found. One burning kiss upon the pure white brow, and then the artizan led the lady to the sofa.

"In heaven's name, lady, pardon me for this!" he cried, standing before her with his hands clasped and extended towards her.

Slowly the maiden raised her eyes, evidently engaged in collecting her scattered senses, but presently she answered, with a look all tenderness and love:

"It is I, Matteo, who should ask pardon of thee. And yet that were but empty form, for the heart asks no forgiveness for its holiest impulses."

Oh! when a true woman loves—a woman who has been free from the cold and heartless conventionalities of society that tend to make sycophants and coquettes—when such a woman loves in the warm, fresh spring time of her life, how utterly impossible it is for her to keep the passion hidden within her own bosom. She is more confiding than man—more trusting and tender; she leans upon his stronger arm, and yearns to know if the blessed boon of love is hers in return.

Woman's heart has been called an enigma; but only those call it so who know not woman's nature. From the time our first mother gathered the fruit for her beloved, even in the very presence of the Evil One himself, woman has in all climes and in all ages risked her all-in-all of earthly hope under the influence of Love. If the heart were divided into lobes, as is the brain, in which sentinels of reflection and reason stood watch and ward over the neighbouring appetites and passions, then we might wonder at many of the freaks of woman's love; but there is only one principle enthroned in the human heart, and that is emotion, and if there be warmth enough in the heart to fuse its emotions into the chief springs of action, then they will sway the individual in spite of the cooler reflections which may come from the brain.

The Lady Paulina had loved the man who had been her companion in music—but had loved him because she could not help it. Not only had she found in him one of the handsomest men she ever saw, possessing those qualities of head and heart which make the true friend and the safe companion; and gifted with that massiveness of frame which is to the confiding woman a bulwark of safety in seasons of personal danger; but the sweet, captivating spirit of music had come in to lead the soul more readily into the realm of love. His grand voice, rich and melodious, swelling up with power and pathos, might alone have captivated one who was fond of melody and song.

But not until her guardian had commanded that she should wed another had she fully comprehended how deeply and devotedly she loved her handsome, high-souled tutor; and as her heart had taken no counsel of the brain, the fact that he was of plebeian origin lessened not the intensity of her passion.

"Paulina, would you spurn me if I should tell you what have been the holiest impulses of my heart?"

Matteo asked the question immediately after the speech of the maiden, and as he spoke he rested his hand upon her wrist. The Lady Paulina returned his gaze, and with perceptible eagerness she said:

"If I have not spoken too much already, I pray you tell me."

"Dear lady," the youth replied, seating himself by her side, and removing his touch from her wrist to her hand, which was suffered to rest in his grasp, "they have all centred in the one holy impulse of worship and devotion. What the future may bring forth we can none of us tell, save the close judgment we may pass upon the result of faculties entirely within our own control; but the one object of this poor life shall be to serve and succour thee. From my humble place I will worship thy purity and goodness, and every energy of my life shall be devoted to your welfare and prosperity. Who shall say what may be hidden in the prolific womb of time? I will not profess to misunderstand you. I read it in your look, and in your speech, that you love me; and I know that ere the sigh went forth that gave me the blessed token you had discovered that my heart was all your own. And now, may we not wait and see what the future can do for us? I dare not think at present in that direction. I am not prepared for thought. We will—"

He stopped suddenly, and at the same instant the Lady Paulina withdrew her hand and started to her feet.

"What was it?" she cried, in a startled whisper. "It was a step beneath the window, I am sure. Let me see."

Matteo went to the window, and looked out upon the balcony. Close at the right hand was another balcony, attached to the window of an adjoining apartment, and our hero was sure that someone had just gone in by that window, for he saw a flitting shadow upon the edge of the wall, and he heard the tread of feet. A man could have easily stepped from one balcony to the other. Matteo reflected a moment, and then turned back into the room.

"Paulina," he said, in a tone so low that it could not have been heard by anyone lurking near, "I am sure there has been an eavesdropper at hand! Can you imagine whence he came?"

"Yes," replied the maiden, her indignation giving her strength above her fear. "It is the work of Giovanni. I call to mind how he regarded me this very morning when we met in the inner court."

"He seeks your hand?"

"Yes; and my guardian sustains the suit."

"And you?"

"The duke has my answer, and hence this espionage."

"I understand you, Paulina; and now I know why your heart was so full. It may be that I shall be shut out from the palace; and it may be worse than that. You know my home—where it is?"

"Yes."

"And you have a friend whom you can trust?"

"Yes, signor."

"Then I shall hear from you if there be need. I had better not remain now; but ere I go let me pledge you my love and my life. Both are yours henceforth."

"Matteo," cried the maiden, grasping his outstretched hand, "while I have power over my own actions they shall not lead me from my love. Before heaven, and sustained by the approval of my own conscience, I give my heart to thee, and heaven grant that the prayers of our souls be answered in the coming time!"

Matteo Bellani responded a fervent Amen, and had turned towards the door, when the Lady Paulina stopped him:

"Matteo, this new-found son of the duke is crafty and treacherous. I can read it in his look. If we have been watched, his malignity may turn upon you. Oh, have a care!"

"Dear Paulina, I am not one of those reckless bravadoes who rush into needless danger for the purpose of exhibiting their bravery. I will look to myself for your sake."

And with this he left the apartment.

Shortly after Matteo took his leave the Lady Paulina met the duchess in one of the corridors.

"So, my child, you have had a visit from Giovanni," said Lavinia, with an arch smile.

"From Giovanni, my lady! Why think you so?"

"Oh, he was not at all secret about it, I assure you. I saw him returning from your apartments not long since."

"If he has been seeking me, he has not made his presence known, signora, for I assure you I have not seen him."

"Indeed. Then he may have only been looking over the palace. I thought you had had a visit from him."

The duchess passed on, while the Lady Paulina, trembling anew with apprehension, wondered what was to be the result of all this. For herself she feared no personal harm; but what would be the result to her lover? Her uncle could be severe and cruel when his passions were aroused, and, as for Giovanni, she believed him capable of any deed that might serve his own ends.

"It is not prejudice against the man because he has crossed my path with his blighting presence," she said, in course of self-examination; "but I can read it in his face. He has a wicked face. Oh, how different from Matteo's."

(To be continued.)

STATISTICS.

HULL DOCKS.—It appears that the total area of the Hull docks and basins is about 84 acres. In 1775 the aggregate burden of the vessels frequenting the harbour was 109,491 tons; after the lapse of 91 years—that is, in 1866—the total had grown to 1,343,819 tons.

PAS-DE-CALAIS.—The coal extraction of the Pas-de-Calais was largely increased last year, having been carried in 1866 to 18,061,638 hectolitres, as compared with 15,548,350 hectolitres in 1865. In 1861 the extraction was scarcely 9,000,000 hectolitres. For 1867 it is set down at 20,000,000 hectolitres.

PRUSSIAN RAILWAYS.—Since 1838, when the first railway was completed in Prussia, the average annual length of railway opened in that kingdom has been 160 miles. At the commencement of this year Prussia had 5,762 miles of lines, but this total would not have been so considerable but for recent annexations of territory. The capital expended upon the 5,762 miles of Prussian railway was estimated at the commencement of 1867 at about 90,000,000l. In 1866 there were, altogether, 1,831 locomotives at work upon Prussian railways.

TURNPIKE TRUSTS.—The annual abstract recently issued of the accounts of turnpike trusts in England and Wales shows that the revenue from tolls, which amounted to 1,066,954l. in the year 1863, and to 1,037,557l. in 1864, was 1,025,631l. in 1865. The value of statute duty performed, and the parish composition in lieu of statute duty, with incidental receipts and 7,373l. money borrowed, brought the total income of 1865 up to 1,102,203l. The expenditure of that year was 1,098,795l.; of which 655,011l., nearly 60 per cent., were in maintenance and improvement of the roads, more than 7 per cent. in salaries, nearly 2 per cent. in law charges, 27 per cent. in paying off debt and paying interest, 4 per cent. in incidental expenses. In 1860 the amount of bonded or mortgage debt was 4,232,478l., and of unpaid interest 556,159l.; in 1864 the bonded debt was reduced to 4,046,346l., and unpaid interest to 498,852l.; in 1865 the bonded debt was 3,852,342l., and unpaid interest 456,707l. The debt paid off is for the most part paid at a discount, the mean amount of the discount being about 25 per cent.; the usual course when money is in hand is stated to be to pay off the creditor, who will for that sum discharge the largest amount of debt. The highway accounts are made up to Lady-day. In the year ending at Lady-day, 1865, the highway rates received in England and Wales amounted to 642,969l., and the work performed in lieu of rates was equal to 21,887l.; but these figures do not include rates made under the Metropolis Local Management Act, the Local Government Act, or Improvement Acts.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

FOR POLISHING STEEL.—A German engineer states that oxide of chromium is the best substance for polishing steel. The article can easily be prepared by heating bi-chromate of potash to redness. It is also used for painting on porcelain. One equivalent of chromic acid is reduced to oxide of chromium, and on well washing the residue of the ignition neutral chromate of potash is washed away and the oxide is left behind.

ARTIFICIAL oil of bitter almonds is manufactured from the benzine of coal tar. A fine stream of benzine and another of smoking nitric acid are allowed to run together in a worm kept well cooled. The liquids react on each other on coming in contact, heat is disengaged, and the artificial oil collected at the end of the worm is first washed with water, then with a solution of carbonate of soda, and lastly again with water.

RECEIPT FOR PREPARING BLUE-BLACK WRITING INK WHICH ALSO SERVES WELL FOR COPYING INK.—Take of blue Aleppo gall five ounces and a half; powdered cloves, two drams; purified sulphate of iron, an ounce and a half; sulphate of indigo (in the

form of a thin paste), an ounce and a half; pure sulphuric acid, thirty-five minims; cold rain water, forty ounces. Bruise the galls and place them and the cloves in twenty ounces of the water in a bottle and digest for seven days. Then pour off the liquor into another bottle and cork it. Then pour ten ounces more water on the galls, and digest four days, and pour off the liquor, as before, into the bottle; then, pour the remaining ten ounces of the water on the galls, and digest four days again, and pour into bottle. Filter the whole through French filtering paper, and wring out the refuse of the galls into a clean strong linen or cotton cloth into the filter, so that nothing be lost. Add the iron, and dissolve and filter through the paper; then the acid, and shake; next the indigo, and mix it thoroughly; lastly, pass the whole through paper. Care must be taken that the indigo does not contain too much free acid.

FACETIE.

WHAT'S the difference between the hair a bald person wears and an Indian tent? One is a wigwam, and the other's a warm wig.

OUR OLD BACHELOR'S LATEST.—Ladies wear corsets from instinct—a natural love of being squeezed.

THERE is one advantage in being a blockhead, you are never attacked with low spirits or apoplexy. The moment a man can worry he ceases to be a fool.

EXCUSES FOR DRINKING.

One drinks because he's very hot as we are often told;

Another must a tankard take because he's very cold;

Another drinks because he's wet, its benefits to try;

Another, sure, a tankard gets because he's very dry;

Another must a bargain make, and have a glass to strike it!

While one and all the liquor take because, in fact, they like it.

"THE winter of my life has come," said Jenkins, as he looked at his white locks in the glass. "I perceive snow in the air."

LOGIC FOR LADIES.—"I've got no hoops on this morning," observed Clara. "How is it you don't sing then?" asked Cousin John. "What do you mean, stupid?" "Why, if there are no hoops, the staves are liable to come out, you know."

LOVERS' VOWS.—"Don't put too much confidence in a lover's vows and sighs," said Mrs. Partington to her niece. "Let him tell you that you have lips like strawberries and cream, cheeks like a carnation, and an eye like an asterisk; but such things often come from a tender head, than a tender heart."

WHERE IGNORANCE IS BLISS, &c.

Gent: "Waiter! Have the goodness to tell me what this stuff is you've brought me."

Waiter: "I couldn't say, but whatever the bill of fare calls it—it's all right! That's the beauty of French cooking, you never know what you're eating!"

ADVERSITY DIDN'T TRY HIM.—"Ah, Sam, so you've been in trouble, hab you?" "Yes, Jim, yes." "Well, well, cheer up, man; adversity tries us, and shows up our best qualities." "Ah, but adversity didn't try me; it was an old wagabond of a judge, and he showed up my worst qualities."

SCARE ME AGAIN.—A young gentleman, after having paid his addresses to a lady for some time, "popped the question." The lady, in a frightened manner, said, "You scare me, sir." The gentleman did not wish to frighten the lady, and consequently remained quiet for some time, when she exclaimed, "Scare me again."

PRAISEWORTHY AMBITION.

Farmer A.: "Fine cattle! Don't you think they look well? The handsomest in the county!"

Farmer B.: "I think they have a better time of it than I do. Nothing to do, but sleep, and eat all they want. I wish I was a beast like that!"

COCKNEYISM.—Witness: "This here feller broke our winder with a tater, and hit Isabeller on the olber as she was playing on the pianer." Magistrate: "The conduct of the prisona' and his general charactra' renda' it prop's that he should no longa' be a membra' of society."

A NOVEL PERFORMANCE.—Near the city of St. Joseph, Missouri, a few years since, the rite of baptism was performed on several women by immersion in the river. As it was winter, it was necessary to cut a hole in the ice, and the novelty of the scene attracted a large crowd, among whom were several Indians, who looked on in wondering silence. They retired without understanding the nature or object of the ceremony they had seen; but, observing that

all the subjects of immersion were females, and getting a vague idea that it was to make them good, the Indians came back a few days afterwards, bringing their squaws with them. Cutting another hole in the ice, near the same place, they immersed each and all of them in spite of their remonstrances.

A MODERN DICTIONARY.

Water.—A clear fluid once used as a drink.

Honesty.—An excellent joke.

Rural Felicity.—Potatoes and turnips.

Tongue.—A little horse that is continually running away.

My Dear.—An expression used by man and wife at the commencement of a quarrel.

Priester.—A poor devil, who runs in debt for his board and cannot pay his washerwoman.

Wealth.—The most respectable quality of men.

Jury.—Twelve persons in a box to try one or more at the bar.

Larrier.—A learned gentleman who rescues your estate from your enemy and keeps it himself.

NOT PERSONALLY INTERESTED.—A four-year-old went to church on Sunday, and when he came home his grandmother asked him what the minister said. "Don't know," said he; "he didn't speak to me." A good many older people might answer in the same way.

A PERSON meeting with an acquaintance after a long absence told him he was surprised to see him, for he had heard that he was dead. "But," says the other, "you find the report false." "Tis hard to determine," he replied, "for the man that told me was one whose word I would sooner take than yours."

CRUELTY TO INFANTS.

Stern Parent: "Pray, what are your objections to the school?"

Song: "They not only forbid a fellow to smoke a pipe, but threaten dismissal for the use of tobacco in any form; even an innocent cigarette! It's a hard case to be forced to live without any little comforts!"

JUST AS SMART.

In a remote little country place two farmers were engaged working in a field one day. The younger, who was the son of the elder, suddenly stopped in his employment, and said:

"Dad, I've heard so much about these Lunnon folks that I should like ter see them."

"Well, my son, we won't be very busy to-morrer; therefore ye may saddle up old Crosshanks, and go ter town."

"Are the people very sharp there?" continued the son.

"Of course they are," said his father. "And mind you, Joe, don't speak to anybody yer most, or yer will show yer foolishness."

"All right, dad; I only want to see the manners and customs of these Lunnon people."

The next morning came, and Joe was soon ready for his journey. He had never been to London, and had grown up a perfect bumpkin in every respect. And when, at times, some reports came from London, his gaping mouth and extended eyes spoke of the astonishment he felt. In fact, the son, like the father, grew up in blissful ignorance of the world and its people; and, when Joe concluded to visit London, his father imagined it quite heroic of his son.

Joe proceeded along his way, occasionally stopping to admire or gaze upon some object that chance'd to present itself to his wondering vision. At length London came in sight, and shortly after Joe entered it. He had not gone far when he saw a well-dressed man, with a fine Newfoundland dog. Joe immediately stopped to admire the dog, for he had never seen one like it. After gazing at it for a moment he said:

"Master, is that your dorg?"

"No," replied the man, who was somewhat of a wag. "I am the dog's master."

Joe pondered over this reply for some time, but came to no understanding about it. He scratched his head, but failed to comprehend the meaning; while the man with the dog slowly walked away, laughing at the ludicrous appearance of Joe, who determined to proceed home again and acquaint his father of the adventure.

He soon returned, and met his father, who was harnessing a donkey.

"Why, Joe, you've got back soon. Were you in the city?"

"Oh, yes, father; but I heerd enough to puzzle me."

"Why, what did yer hear?" asked the father.

"Well, I'll tell yer," said Joe. "When I got in town I saw a dandy kind of a chap, with a big dorg. Says I to the man, says I, 'Master, is that your dorg?' 'No,' says he, 'I'm the dorg's master.' Now, father, wasn't that a smart answer?"

"Nonsense, Joe; I could have said as much myself. But what did you do then?"

"Why," said Joe, "that answer was enough for me, and I made back for home."

"That wasn't, I say, a smart reply; and, as I said before," continued the father, "I could have told you the same thing."

"I doubt it, father," answered Joe.

"Well," returned the father, "to show yer that I could have said the same thing, imagine me to be that dandy, and that donkey therr the dorg. Now, then, question me as you did the man you saw."

"All right," said Joe, who doubted the intelligence his father boasted of possessing. "Are you ready now?"

"Yes," said the father.

"Well, then, father, is that donkey yours?"

"No. I'm the donkey's father."

THE LATEST.—The latest improvement observable in the way of advertising consists in the fixing up of a large mirror against the wall of the house, lettering across it, in gold, the name of the advertiser and his wares. It draws—crowds stop to admire the novelty and themselves—and ladies are particularly anxious to behold therein the glass of fashion and the mould of form. Many a fanion bonnet takes a peep to see if its lace falls gracefully behind, and a bronze bonnet if its holly and berries keep at an angle of forty-five degrees.

A HOME THRUST.

A clergyman who enjoys the substantial benefits of a fine farm, was slightly taken down a few days ago by his Irish ploughman, who was sitting at his plough in a field, resting his horse. The reverend gentleman, being an economist, said, with great seriousness:

"John, wouldn't it be a good plan for you to have a stub scythe here and be cutting a few bushes along the fence while the horse is resting a short time?"

John, with quite as serious a countenance as the divine wore himself, said:

"Wouldn't it be well, sir, for you to have a tub of potatoes in the pulpit, and when they are singing to peel 'em awhile to be ready for the pot?"

The reverend gentleman laughed heartily and left.

A CLERGYMAN going to a miserly old lady to beg for a worthy object found himself refused on the ground of poverty. Feigning himself much interested in her story, he expressed great surprise therat, and said: "I had not thought you in such want;" and then taking out some money he said, "Here is something that will do for the present purpose; when I call again I will bring you more." The old lady was so enraged that she gave him a good round sum to show him that she did not mean she was a pauper.

THE REAL CHAMPIONS OF THE RING.—Mothers with daughters to marry.

WHY is love like a Scotch plaid? Because it's all stuff and often crossed.

A CONSCRIPT being told that it was sweet to die for his country, excused himself on the ground that he never did like sweet things.

WHY are people of short memories necessarily covetous? Because they're always forgetting something.

"I KNOW every rock on the coast," said an Irish pilot. At that moment the ship struck, when he exclaimed, "And that's one of them!"

A THIEF was lately caught breaking into a song. He had already got through two bars, when a policeman came up and hit him with a stave. Several notes were found upon him.

SQUARING THE CIRCLE.—A gentleman writes to one of the papers, stating that he has at last succeeded in "squaring the circle." Here is the result of his labour:— $\pi = \sqrt{6339784548309993729}$; area, $78539816339784548309993729$; circumference of circle, $3.141592653589793193239974916$; ratios, $3.926990816986724154996845 - 1.25$.

BISMARCK AND HIS BARBER.—Bismarck met his barber at Baden-Baden and affably spoke to him. The barber gave himself hairs, and complained of the mixed society at Baden-Baden. The count gave him a happy quid pro quo by remarking, "Well, C——, we cannot all be barbers, you know."

AN OLD THREE.—The other day an innkeeper in the neighbourhood of Todmorden had a customer, who had dined and wined, then offered in the course of conversation to show the landlord how to draw "three-penny" and "best" ale from the same cask. Boniface taking the bait, the pair descended into the cellar with a large gimlet, with which the ingenious traveller bored a hole in one end of a cask. Telling the landlord to place his finger over the hole, he then

bored another at the other end of the cask, and the wondering pupil next placed a finger of the other hand over this second hole also. The learned professor then returned upstairs to fetch his "apparatus," and when the landlord grew tired and called for assistance, he, of course, found that he had been "done."

The drama, by Sophocles, entitled "Antigone," was performed the other night in Dublin. At the end of the play there was a loud and general call for "the author," and the manager was obliged to come before the curtain and beg that Sophocles might be excused, as he had been dead two thousand years.

THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN.—"Persons" may be forbidden to approach the hustings. But the chignon cannot be kept away from the poll.—*Punch's Almanack, 1868.*

ARGUMENT FOR SHORT SKIRTS.—They give plain girls a chance. What Nature has denied the face she often gives to the understanding.—*Punch's Almanack, 1868.*

PARENTAL EXPERIENCE.

Truth, so the ancient legends tell,
Rests at the bottom of a well;
My son, how many rogues I've known
Careful to let that well alone!

Punch's Almanack, 1868.

BREAKFAST.—Always visit your poultry yard before breakfast. If unable to find a fresh egg, go to the cattle sheds. Remember that, where eggs cannot be obtained, a *goat* of fine oxen beaten up with a cup of tea is most invigorating.—*Punch's Almanack, 1868.*

INTERNATIONAL LAW.—*Note on a Legal Maxim.*—Why does a man employing an agent become a navigator? Because *Qui facit per alium facit per se.* (And in going from Folkestone to Boulogne it requires a good deal of pluck to *facie it per se.*)—*Punch's Almanack, 1868.*

THE FEWER relations or friends that we have the happier we are. In your poverty they never help you; in your prosperity they always help themselves.—*Tomahawk.*

TAKE this as a general rule in life. The more reasons a man or woman has to be grateful to you, the more excuses he or she has to injure you.—*Tomahawk.*

A FATHER who prided himself on the disinterested affection and dutiful behaviour of his son, told Diogenes that he intended to settle so much of his fortune on him as would make him independent. "I see," answered the philosopher, "you want to get rid of him."—*Tomahawk.*

FROM THE CATTLE SHOW.—*Phil (to sister):* "Look here, Carrie; just wait here a minute while I go and look for the guy not among the pigs!"—*Fun.*

A FIT OCCUPATION FOR THE PEELERS.—Stop the orange-peelers who jeopardize the limbs of the pedestrian at every step.—*Fun.*

VERY LIKE A WHALE.—If the heir to the throne boasts the title of Prince of W(h)ales, there can surely be no reason why his brother, the Duke of Edinburgh, should not, after his late hunting feats, be styled the Prince of Elephants.—*Fun.*

THE WEATHER AND THE PARKS.

A medical man and a barrister met in "the parks" during "the weather." Says the barrister, "I can't keep myself warm o' nights, and yet I'm always well wrapped up when I go to bed."

"Just my case," returned the doctor. "I suffer from being rapped up several times during the night."—*Punch.*

AFTER THE FIRE.

"Why are policemen stationed at all the doors of Her Majesty's?" asked somebody.

And somebody replied, "To prevent the fire breaking out again, I suppose."—*Punch.*

DIARY OF A DAIRYMAN.—Been reading a ignorant article in a public journal saying that our 4 penny milk ain't worth more than 8 farthings a qt., no allowance made for talent, loss of time, and labour in improving upon natur. Then people nowadays are so finicking—they look in the milk-jug for perfect purity! Why, what is perfect purity? It's a vision; where will you find it? In the House of Parliament? Why their skin is wiser than ours by a long chalk. We don't initiate a constituency by giving them horrid lucre, we only employ natur's universal solvent water, and what else ought a liberal and discerning public to expect but water in this whale of tears? Half of all the infants in this country perish before their 5 years old, say the statistics, and we're to be held responsible because town milk don't nourish as it ought to! Preposterous! as if a dairyman was a Nero, whereas (when his profits is not affected) his feelings tallies with the sentiments of a Howard, and he overflows with

the milk of human kindness. Look at the rivers how cruelly they're abused—rivers from which we, draw our necessary supplies—how can a pertikler public have its milk a sweet sky-blue when the lovely streams which meanders through the flowery meads is contaminated by dyers and scoulers? We always had to bear a deal of opprobrium, and goodness knows we often groan beneath the yoke. Happily no law can touch us, for water ain't like a artificial pison, and falls of necessity within the pale.—*Punch.*

THE BRIDE'S SONG.

ROYAL bridegroom of the sea,
Proud sun, on thy path of splendour,
Hasten, where impatiently
She awaiteth, true and tender,

Her white arms outstretched to thee.

Hide the glories of thy state

From my overworned vision;

The glad hours for which I wait

Cannot come, with joys elysian,

Till the morning opes her gate.

Go and let the stars o'erhead

Show their shining, modest faces;

Let the moon, accompanied

By her sweet attendant graces,

Reign her little hour instead.

So the darkness may come on,

And the darkness may be over;

And the night and morning gone

That do keep me from my lover,

Who hath brightness past the sun.

Oh, my bridegroom, when we meet,

Never more shall we be parted;

Oh, my bridegroom, true and sweet,

Thou art kingly, lion-hearted,

Thou art manhood's self-complete.

I to thee will be so true,

So unchangingly will love thee,

All life's changing journey through,

That the angels set above thee

Will have nothing left to do.

Yet what thoughts are tenderest

Surely I can never show thee;

How shall I repay thee best?

I, who under God, must owe thee,

All that makes existence blest?

P. C.

GEMS.

THE moment a man is satisfied with himself everybody else is dissatisfied with him.

ANGUISH of mind has driven thousands to suicide, anguish of body few. This proves that the health of the mind is of far more importance than the health of the body, although both are deserving of much more attention than either of them receives.

THE Germans have the gift of visions without the gift of utterance; the French have the gift of utterance, with the gift of vision; the English have partly the gift of vision, and partly the gift of utterance.

THERE is a sacredness in tears. They are not the mark of weakness, but of power. They speak more eloquently than ten thousand tongues. They are the messengers of overwhelming grief, of deep contrition and of unspeakable love.

HAVE a definite purpose in life. Never lose sight of it. Think of it by day; dream of it by night. Push early, late, often. Let your aim be what it may in reason, and it will be accomplished. All success is simply this reduced to a bare outline.

NEVER despair. It does no good. Give up to it, and you suffer all manner of unnecessary miseries. Recollect that others have been in ten times worse plights, have stoutly braved it out, and made a triumph. A square purpose, a decided will, and a foot put solidly down, are all you want.

A GHOST STORY.—Prendergast, an officer in the Duke of Marlborough's army, had mentioned to many of his friends that he should die on a certain day. Upon that day a battle took place with the French; after it was over, and Prendergast was still alive, his brother officers, while they were still on the field, asked him jestingly where was his prophecy now? Prendergast gravely answered, "I shall die notwithstanding what you see." Soon after there came a shot from a French battery to which order for a cessation of arms had not yet reached, and he was killed upon the spot. Colonel Cecil, who took possession of his effects, found in his pocket-book the following solemn entry. [Here the date]—"Dreamt or was told by an apparition, Sir John Friend meets

me" [here the very day on which he was killed was mentioned]. Prendergast had been connected with Sir John, who was executed for high treason. General Oglethorpe said he was with Col. Cecil when Pope came and inquired into the truth of this story, which made a great noise at the time, and was then confirmed by the colonel.

MISCELLANEOUS.

The Atlantic cable receipts averaged for the month of October over 1,200*L* per day, including Sundays.

THE STRAWBERRY.—It is said that the only fruit which grows in every climate is the strawberry. It is the only fruit which somewhere on the earth is picked every day the year round.

ASPARAGUS IN FRANCE.—The increase of the demand for asparagus in France may be estimated from the fact that the money received for it at Argentenil in 1820 was 5,000 francs; in 1840, 20,000 francs, and in 1867, 400,000.

SALISBURY CATHEDRAL.—The first of the statues to be placed in the vacant niches in the west front of Salisbury Cathedral has been fixed. It is the statue of Christ holding a globe, and is 7 feet high.

THE "FINGAL'S CAVE" AQUARIUM.—The principal aquarium at the International Maritime Exhibition, which is to be opened at Havre next spring, is to represent Fingal's Cave. It will be 130 ft. in length and 50 ft. in breadth. The works are already commenced.

CLIMATE OF ABYSSINIA.—According to observations made by Dr. Blane, one of King Theodore's prisoners, the average temperature at mid-day during the months of January, February, March, and April at Magdala is 75 deg. The highest temperature at the same time of day was 82 deg.; the lowest, 57 deg.

THE BOUBULINA WRECK.—Mr. Paul, the diver to the Liverpool underwriters, has been down to make an investigation of the wreck of the Boubulina. He finds that she has parted abaft the after boiler, and that her deck and plankings abaft had been blown up. As the coal bunkers were aft this strengthens the presumption that coal gas was the cause of the mischief.

A FORTUNATE MASON.—"Don" Genaro, who has lately left to the ex-King of Naples a fortune of over 30,000*L*, was not a noble at all, but a mason, who obtained his fortune at a lottery. One day he succeeded in stopping the horses of King Francis as they were running away. The King asked Genaro what reward he wished. The ex-mason replied, "Give me the 'Don.'" The King expressed his surprise, but Genaro replied that he was rich, and wanted nothing else. "So be it, Don Genaro," said the King.

A SWORD-FISH ON THE YORKSHIRE COAST.—At Bridlington a fine sword-fish, 12 ft. 4 in. in length—the sword extending upwards of 4 ft. from the body—was captured by Barnett and Armstrong, while fishing for herrings in Bridlington Bay; and during the same night another fish, much larger than the one caught, got entangled in the same net, and put the men in great fear of the cable being upset. After a hard struggle, and destroying several nets, the fish got clear away.

RAIN IN INDIA.—When it does rain in India it pours. In the Nerubuda valley the average rainfall for the first nine months of the present year was nearly 70 in., and the chief commissioner has already received a detailed report of the damage done by the overflowing of the river in the Hoshungabad district. The deputy-commissioner of Saugor reports that on the night of the 11th September 8*1/2* in. of rain fell at that station, and that, as might be expected, much damage was done to the town and country.

THE GOVERNMENT AND THE TELEGRAPHES.—The Bill to be introduced to enable the Government to obtain possession of the electric telegraphs of the United Kingdom will not be deposited until the usual term for depositing private Bills. It will in the first instance be treated as a private Bill. On passing and becoming an Act of Parliament, Government will then introduce a Money Bill, to enable them to give effect to the measure. It is not thought probable that anything will be done in the matter until the session of 1869.

TURKISH FORESTS AND MINES.—The Turkish Government is trying at last to turn to account its forests and mines, but the difficulty which frightens away everyone is the want of means of communication in the interior. The concessionaires don't care to lay out the large sums which the removal of this evil would require, and the Government of course cannot do it. So, in spite of the great mineral wealth of the country, no one will take the mines. One forest district in Bosnia has been, however, sold, and is expected to yield 20,000*L*.

CONTENTS.

	Page
THE GOLDEN HOPE ...	263
A MARRIAGE CUSTOM IN YORKSHIRE ...	268
THE VAMPIRE BAT ...	268
THE HEIR APPARENT ...	268
QUEEN ANNE'S FARTHING	268
WHO WAS IT? ...	269
SWEET ROSES YANGLED... SCIENCE ...	272
COMPLETION OF THE MONT CERNIE LINE ...	274
FLICKER STONE ...	274
WOOD-PULP PAPER ...	274
TEXTILE FROM HOP VINES ...	274
HOW TO REMOVE FOUL AIR FROM WELLS ...	274
THE SILENT PARTNER, COMMENCED IN ...	274
THE FIRST SMILE: A CHRISTMAS STORY ...	277
MIGRATIONS OF SWAL- LOWS ...	279
LOUIS ...	280
FANNY SUMMERS	281
	243
	No.
	210
	236
	236
	236
	241
	243
	243

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

L. A. L.—See our answer to "E. E. W."

L. A.—You are singularly impudent; we replied to your question in No. 241 of THE LONDON READER.

E. E. W.—How can you reasonably expect us to tell you whether we can accept a story without personal?

JESSE B.—Performed in a Protestant church the marriage would be legal.

READER FROM THE FIRST.—Your communication is incomprehensible, we cannot decipher it.

AGNER.—With fewer flourishes and a little practice your writing would not be bad; but avoid carelessness.

F. V.—Apply at the office of any ship-owner. One time of the year is as good as another.

FANNY.—The tale "Stanley Lockwood" was commenced in No. 154 of THE LONDON READER, and was concluded in No. 168.

LIZZIE.—Your handwriting is too straggling and sloping, thus rendering the letters indistinct; but practise carefully and patiently, and you will overcome these defects.

A CONSTANT LOVER.—A young lady cannot be married legally without the consent of her parents or guardians, until she has attained the age of twenty-one.

LARAUT.—To clean plate: 1 part of sal ammoniac, 16 parts of vinegar; mix, and use this liquid with a piece of flannel, then wash in clean water, and afterwards polish with rouge.

CHARLIE GOTTHE.—The paste of sweet almonds, which contains an oil fit for rendering the skin soft and elastic, and removing indurations, may be beneficially applied to the hands and arms.

MCKNAPP.—Your handwriting is not by any means sufficiently good for a merchant's office. Take a few lessons from a good master and practise well, or you will never attain your desire.

HELPS.—All should indeed be ashamed and afraid of what is really disgraceful, but to shrink under every reflection upon one's character, though it implies an ingenuousness and delicacy of temper, has nothing in it of true greatness.

GEORGE.—A yeoman of the guard is one belonging to the foot-guards who attend at the Palace and the Tower; these yeomen are clad after the fashion of the time of Henry VIII., and are generally called beef-eaters or butchers.

MAYER.—To ascertain if vegetables are old break a piece off; if it snaps脆ly it is fresh, if on the contrary it appears soft the vegetable is stale, and consequently not wholesome.

LUCY.—The asp, or aspiss, is a kind of serpent, whose poison is so dangerous and quick in its operation that it kills without a possibility of applying any remedy; those that are bitten by it die from lethargy.

DAVID TAYLOR.—If you have not the interest of a director of the company, apply personally or by letter, stating qualifications, and with testimonials as to character, to the secretary of the P. and O. Company.

VIVIAN.—Serenity, health, and happiness attend the desire of rising by labour; misery, repentance, and disrespect that of succeeding by extorted benevolence. The man who has himself alone to thank for the happiness he enjoys is truly blessed.

W. M.—The learned doctor is a foreigner, we do not know his address. Have patience, however, with the treatment received from the eminent medical men under whom you have placed yourself, and in all probability time will effect a cure.

ELEANOR.—*Decani* is a term employed in cathedral music, implying that the passages to which it is affixed must be taken by those singers who are placed on that side of the building where the *Dean* sits, that is, on the right hand side on entering the choir from the nave.

MORTIMER.—Subsidy means a stipulated sum of money paid by one prince to another, in pursuance of a treaty of alliance for offensive or defensive war. Subsidy troops are the troops of one nation assisting those of another, for a given sum or subsidy.

AGNES.—The Palace of Versailles was built by Louis XIV., and since the year 1837 it has become the museum dedicated to the national glories of France; it is remarkable for its picture-galleries, sculptures, parks, gardens, lakes, and water-works, all of which are open to the public daily, with the exception of Monday.

HENRY.—The Lord Chancellor is created by the will of the Sovereign, by the mere act of delivering the Great Seal into his custody, and his office continues during the pleasure of the Crown; but virtually he resigns his office with his party. He is Speaker of the House of Lords, and by virtue of his office a member of the Privy Council. He issues writs for

summoning Parliament, and transacts all business connected with the custody of the Great Seal. He is principal adviser to the Crown in matters of law, chief judge of the Court of Chancery, and head of the profession of the law. He appoints nearly all the judges of the superior courts, the commissioners in bankruptcy, the judges of county courts, and all justices of the peace, and is patron of all Crown livings rated under £20. He is visitor in right of the Crown of all hospitals and colleges of Royal foundation; has the general guardianship of all infants, idiots, and lunatics, and exercises a special jurisdiction in questions relating to charities and trust estates. He ranks above all dukes not of the blood Royal, and next to the Archbishop of Canterbury.

AN ANXIOUS ONE.—Three weeks' notice will be required. The fee is only a few shillings; all that is necessary is to go before a registrar, declaring your intention of taking each other as man and wife, and receiving a certificate of the marriage, which will be in every way legal. 2. Handwriting good.

HASTINGS asks when the word "We" was first adopted by editors. The time, we believe, is not quite certain; however, it is well known that it was first adopted in England by King John in the year 1217, about the same time that towns were formed into corporations—viz., those of Rouen and Falaise in Normandy.

CLARA.—To keep lemons, take those that are quite good and run fine pack-thread about a quarter of a yard long through the hard nib at the end of the lemon, then tie the string together, and hang them on a hook in an airy, dry place; be sure they do not touch one another, and hang them up as high as possible.

OLIVER.—Peter de Wint was an English water-colour painter, who at first studied engraving, but relinquished it for the department of art in which he subsequently became celebrated. During forty years his landscape views of Kent, Cumberland, Westmorland, and other English counties, were amongst the greatest attractions of the annual exhibition of the society of painters in water colours.

MARIAM.—The words *Olla Podrida* are Spanish, signifying putrid mixture, and is the name of a favourite dish with all classes in Spain; it consists of a mixture of all kinds of meat cut into small pieces, and stewed with various kinds of vegetables; when kept long it has a disagreeable odour, hence the name. In England the phrase *Olla Podrida* is used metaphorically for any incongruous mixture.

TIME.

In vain we search the annals of crime
For so monstrous a thief as old Father Time;
Not till earthy being can boast of the power
To hold the old robber in bondage an hour.

Onward he marches at a furious pace,
Never halting a moment in the terrible race;
And this heavy old monster is only content
When on errands of plunder his footsteps are bent.

He robs us of beauty, of youth, and of grace,
He bows the fair form, and disfigures the face;
His footmarks leave deeper their impress each day,
And he turns the brown locks and the golden to gray.

J. S. C.

CLOCKMAKER.—Either Mr. Bennett, of Cheapside, or Mr. Benson, Ludgate Hill, we forget which, published a work upon watch and clock making. Your best plan would be to purchase the number of one of the cheap encyclopedias (say Chambers's) containing the article upon watches and clocks, or clocks and watches; the price of that work is three half-pence, and would doubtless answer your purpose.

B. R. P.—If in perfect condition the work is without doubt of some value. From any ordinary book-buyer you would, however, obtain but a small sum; the price of such books depends much upon the fancy of Shakespearian collectors. If the book be really perfect, and a rare edition, you should show it to the principal librarians of the British Museum, who would at least treat you with all courtesy.

E. M.—Feathers may be dyed crimson by immersing them in a mixture of alumina mordant, then in a hot decoction of Brazil wood, and afterwards dipping them in cubeb. Pink or rose colour is produced by safflower and lemon juice. 2. To curl feathers, heat them gently before the fire, then, with the back of a knife applied to them, they will be found to curl quickly and well.

HELLICE.—1. The best preservative for the teeth is cleanliness; they should be well brushed at least morning and evening; but if decay has taken place, take 1 oz. of myrrh, finely powdered, 2 spoonfuls of the best white honey, and a little powdered green sage; mix well together, and wet the teeth and gums with it every night and morning. 2. Rub a little glycerine (which can be bought at any chemist) upon your hands at night, and wear gloves in bed.

L. O.—In the Seamen's Registry Office the patronage is vested in the President of the Board of Trade. Candidates for clerkships are eligible from seventeen to thirty. Examination consists of writing from dictation, transcribing, the first four rules of arithmetic, practice and the rule of three, précis, geography, translation from one accent or modern language. Hours and holidays the same as the Board of Trade.

MIRIAM.—Holy Thursday is the day on which the ascension of our Saviour is commemorated, ten days before WhitSunday. It has been kept in the Christian Church from the earliest ages. St. Augustine speaks of it as either instituted by the Apostles, or by some early council of the primitive bishops. This day is, however, now greatly neglected, for what reason it is difficult to account, except it be that it is not marked by any worldly festivities.

KELLY.—Hornpipe is a rustic musical instrument seldom seen, except in Wales, where it is still very common; its Welsh name is *pib-corn*, meaning hornpipe. It is so called from its being constructed of a wooden pipe, with holes at certain distances, and a horn at each end, one to collect the wind blown into it, and the other to augment the sound. This term is also applied to a dance in triple time of six crotchetts in a bar.

MARCH.—The three estates of the Realm are the three branches of the legislature—the Lords spiritual, the Lords temporal, and the Commons. The Sovereign, Lords, and Commons in their united character exercise none but legislative functions. The three are the Parliament, but no bill

can become law unless all concur in it; in addition, each has separate functions peculiar to itself. The whole executive authority is vested in the Sovereign; the House of Lords exercises judicial authority as a court of *decretum rescript*, and is the tribunal to which any great officers of State impeached by the Lower House, are amenable. The House of Commons, the least endowed with any authority, has powers for the maintenance of its privileges, compelling before it the appearance of persons whom it desires to examine, and also for extracting any information necessary for conducting the national business.

WALTER.—Nitrogen gas is, as its name implies, the producer of "nitre," or at least forms a portion of the nitric acid contained in nitre; it is rather lighter than atmospheric air, colourless and transparent, incapable of supporting animal life, on which account it is sometimes called "nitre," but incorrectly, as it is not a poison like many other gases, but destroys life only in the absence of oxygen. This gas extinguishes all burning bodies plunged into it, and does not itself burn. It exists largely in nature, for four-fifths of the atmosphere consists of nitrogen gas.

DUVAL.—The name of "Prester John" was given during the middle ages to a supposed Christian sovereign, whose dominions were in the direction of China. He seems to have been discovered by some Nestorian missionaries about the year 1,100, and was imagined to be a Tartar. Sir John Mandeville, who travelled in 1322 and 1325, calls him the "Great Emperor of Inde," who ruled over 72 provinces and especially over the islands of Pentoxire and Mistoxire. According to this traveller, he assumed his priestly name in Egypt on account of the high respect in which priests were held. Some time after the name was applied to the supposed head of the Coptic Church in Ethiopia, or Abyssinia.

FRANK.—Depth of focus is a term frequently used by photographers. As the focus of a pencil of rays is strictly a point, it is obvious that the term is scientifically inaccurate. Depth of definition has been suggested as more correct; it is meant to convey that property possessed in a greater or lesser degree by lenses, of representing objects situated at widely varying distances from the camera with equal distinctness, and in accordance with the power possessed by a lens of doing this, as is said to be its depth of focus. This property is conferred on a landscape lens by reducing its stop; the shorter the focus of a lens, whether for portraits or landscapes, the greater will be the depth of definition which it will give.

ALPHONSE.—In writing Russian proper names the same rules must be followed as those adopted for Oriental names in general, as the Russians employ neither Roman characters, nor those which can with ease be converted into Roman characters. Russ is one of the Slavonic idioms, and is subdivided into three dialects: viz., the Great Russ, now the literary and official language of Russia, the Little Russ, a compound of the Great Russ and the Polish; and the White Russ, formerly the official language of Lithuania. Till the time of Peter the Great the Russians employed an alphabet fabricated by the Monk Cyril of the ninth century; it was taken chiefly from the Greek, with some signs added to it, to represent sounds peculiar to the Slavonic dialects.

J. L.—Gin or gyn is a contraction of the word engine, a machine employed for raising heavy weights, driving piles, &c. It consists of three poles, about twelve or sixteen feet long, placed in the ground eight or nine inches apart, united at the top by a rope twisted several times round each, and an iron ring. Two of the poles are kept at a proper distance by a movable iron bar placed between them in a horizontal position; a windlass is also secured between the two poles about three feet and a half from the ground. When in use the gin is placed over the object to be raised, and a rope, one end of which is secured around the windlass before mentioned, and carried thence through a pulley at the top of the poles, is then fixed to it; when, by turning the windlass, by means of handspikes, it may be raised the required height.

ELISK.—nineteen, tall, fair, and good looking. Respondent must be about thirty, tall and dark, a tradesman preferred.

WILDE DAISY.—seventeen, 5 ft. 2½ in., gray eyes, light brown hair, and respectably connected. Respondent must be tall, dark, and handsome, with not less than 500. per annum.

JEANIE.—seventeen, 5 ft. 3 in., dark brown hair and eyes, very respectable. Respondent must be tall, handsome, well connected, and 400 a year.

J. S. B.—twenty, 5 ft. 9 in., blue eyes, dark brown hair, and fond of music. 200. a year, when of age. Respondent must be about the same age, rather tall and handsome.

FANNY.—seventeen, dark brown hair, gray eyes, medium height. (Handwriting much too small, but practise often and you will no doubt improve.)

SON OF ERIN.—thirty, 5 ft. 11 in., well made and strong-looking, dark brown hair, whiskers and beard, belonging to the Church of England. Respondent must be a lady who could move in society, and with a little money.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

BEATRICE is responded to by—"J. W." twenty-eight, a carpenter, medium height.

M. D. by—"Louisa Stanton." (Handwriting requires much practice, and more care in the formation of the letters, it is at present very indistinct.)

PART LVI., FOR JANUARY, IS NOW READY. PRICE 6d

* Now Ready, VOL IX. OF THE LONDON READER. Price 4s. 6d.

Also, the TITLE and INDEX to VOL IX. Price ONE PENNY.

N. B.—CORRESPONDENTS MUST ADDRESS THEIR LETTERS TO THE EDITOR OF "THE LONDON READER," 334, STRAND, W.C.

† We are sorry to undertake to return Rejected Manuscripts. If they are sent to us voluntarily, authors should retain copies.

London: Printed and Published for the Proprietor, at 334, Strand, by J. WATSON.